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# Motivation and capacity to be sustainable consumers: types of participant and non-participant citizens<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

That citizens of European and other high-income countries change their lifestyles is seen by an increasing number of scholars as crucial to reach a sustainable development (Dobson 2003, Smith & Pangsapa 2008), IPCC 2007). In addition, policymakers such as the European Union are now trying to motivate and enable citizens to take responsibility for sustainable development, especially by adopting more sustainable consumption practices (European Union 2004, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 2009, Skr 2005/06:107, Skr 1994/95:120). However, this change of sometimes deeply rooted consumption patterns has proven to be a challenging matter in a globalized world. This has led some scholars to believe that in order to accomplish such a change, citizens of Europe and elsewhere need to adopt a new citizenship model as a compliment to financial incentives and regulations. Neither traditional civic republican and liberal citizenship theories nor the more recent cosmopolitan theory are seen as capable of providing the foundation needed to achieve sustainable development. Some suggest that the *sustainable citizenship*<sup>2</sup> can fill this gap by stretching the citizenship spatially, time-wise and materially (e.g. Dobson 2007, Matti 2008,

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1 The text will in the future be transformed to make up a part of a chapter in my dissertation.

2 Many scholars prefer to use the term "ecological citizenship". This study use the term "sustainable citizenship" as interrelated to "ecological citizenship" but with greater focus on the economical and social dimension of sustainable development.

Seyfang 2006, Connelly 2009).

Sustainable citizenship-scholars argue that “the ecological footprint”<sup>3</sup> created by citizens by their actions in both the public and private spheres sometimes give rise to injustices that link citizens over the world to each other and to future generations (Dobson 2003). The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has for example made calculations showing that the Swedes’ emissions of green house gases from private consumption has to be reduced by no less than 80 % until year 2050 (2008). One major contributor to this pollution is people’s food consumption, especially the consumption of meat which is the largest source of green house gases emissions (18 % of all emissions). Meat consumption is also increasing and is calculated to be doubled by the year 2050 (FAO 2006). Private consumption has also been linked to the social and economical dimension of sustainable development in studies focusing on workers’ situation in low-income countries where many of the products consumed in high-income countries are produced (e.g. Young 2006, Maldidier 2008, Vuillon 2008, Lori 2008, Micheletti and Stolle 2007). To redeem these injustices which will harm the well-being of now-living and future generations, responsibility-taking in the private sphere by changing one’s own lifestyle is sometimes not only preferable but also necessary accordingly to some scholars (Dobson 2003).

This study investigates *sustainable consumption* as a way to take responsibility for sustainable development as a citizen. The phenomenon of sustainable consumption can include various practices, the most common forms being refraining from buying products that is believed to threaten a sustainable development (boycotting) or deliberately buying a product in order to support the principles under which it is produced (“boycotting”). However, sustainable consumption is in this paper exemplified and operationalized as choosing ecological and Fairtrade labeled products in the supermarket. The dramatic increase in sales of these two product categories in many European countries also shows that sustainable citizenship is not only an ideal but a necessary adaption of citizenship theory to actual practices and shifts in attitudes among citizens. This development is framed differently by different scholars, but is perhaps best described as “the postmodern shift” in the wordings of Ronald Inglehart (Inglehart 1999).

The overarching aim of this paper is to investigate who the sustainable consumers and the non-sustainable consumers are. To fulfill this aim, two research questions will be answered: 1) Which individual characteristics are required to be a sustainable consumer? This question will be answered theoretically and empirically with the help of previous research on citizenship and civic engagement. 2) What types of

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3 The ecological footprint is defined as “the land (and water) area that would be required to support a defined human population and material standard indefinitely” (Wackernagel and Res 1996 in Reynolds, Blackmore & Smith 2009:261). The footprint metaphor has also been used for describing the impact that citizens could have on the social and economical dimension of sustainability by using different terms such as “sustainable footprint” or “sweaty footprint” (Stolle, Berlin & Micheletti, forthcoming).

consumers could be found based on their motivation and capacity to participate in sustainable consumerism? Previous political science studies of political consumerism have been profiling political consumer at a general level (e.g. Ferrer-Fons 2004; Micheletti och Stolle 2004; Tobiasen 2004; Strømsnes 2004). These scholars were able to conclude that political consumers are overrepresented among highly educated women who are fairly well off. This study will take another approach by making use of quantitative cluster analysis to identify different consumer types, based on their will and capability to participate in sustainable consumption which is seen as closely related to political consumerism (cluster analysis is a method to find groups of respondents which are as similar to each other as possible on selected factors – more information about the method and the analytical approach will be provided below).

The choice of analytical approach has several aims: i) to make a deepened analysis of political and non-political consumers by diversifying the groups and create a typology, ii) to root this typology in both theory and empirical material, iii) to analyze variables that could be underlying to common used categories such as gender and class, iv) to create a foundation for further both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Reasons for participating or not participating could be different for different clusters. Treating the group of consumers as too homogenous could make these differences become fuzzy or even invisible. With this approach, we also have the advantage of being able to analyze groups of consumers who based on previous research could be assumed to be sustainable consumers but who do not participate. Analyses of this group could thus provide an apprehensive depiction of the “barriers to action” (Hobson 2003) or the lack of suitable opportunities they might experience (this task will not be carried out in this paper though).

Data from the national representative “Consumption and Societal Issues Survey 2009”, conducted in Sweden in 2009 with 1053 respondents, is utilized to answer the questions posed. The survey, as well as the dissertation project for which this text will be used, is a part of the research project “Sustainable Citizenship: Opportunities and Barriers for Citizen Involvement in Sustainable Development” funded by the Swedish Council of Research (see attachment 6 for more information on the data). The purpose of the project Sustainable Citizenship is to study the barriers to and opportunities for sustainable action on the part of individual citizens in Sweden. It investigates how individuals think about sustainable development in relation to private consumption and whether concerns for sustainable development affect their consumer choices and practices. Its general research questions are: (1) Do Swedish citizens have the necessary prerequisites to be sustainable consumers? (2) Do they think about the consequences of their consumer choices and practices for sustainable development? (3) Do they exercise good (sustainable) judgment in their consumer choices and practices? (4) Why/why not is this the case? The project studies sustainable development as three-dimensional, including the environmental as well as the economical and social dimension of sustainability.

This introduction is followed by a section that presents previous research and gives a theoretical foundation for the coming cluster analysis. After this section, method and results of the cluster analysis will be presented, followed by a chapter discussing the future tasks for this research project.

## **2 Motivational and capacity-building factors for sustainable consumerism**

Both in social movement and political participation theory, the dominant model to explain collective action could be described as follows (Kriesi & Westholm 2007):

*Discontent + resources + opportunity → collective action*

It is mainly the content and the relative importance of these concepts that is contested, which also has had some impact on the exact wording capturing the concepts. While “discontent” (or dissatisfaction) is commonly used (Adman 2008, Kriesi & Westholm 2007, Petersson et al 1998) some scholars use wider concepts, such as “motivation” (e.g. Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007) or “civic orientation” (Leighly 1995) indicating that citizens does not necessarily chose to participate because that they are dissatisfied with something, but also to give legitimacy and show support for example. Futhermore, instead of “resources” the concept “capacity” or “capability” is sometimes used (e.g. Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007). The term was used by Amartya Sen to describe what an individual or group is actually able to do or be (Sen 1992).

As mentioned, the relation between motivation and capacity is contested. One explanation suggests that they are linked together additively, like the model above indicates. Resources do not become relevant before you are motivated to participate, and opportunities do not arise until you have resources (Kriesi & Westholm 2007). Although resources are deemed crucial, motivation is in this model a necessary condition. Others focus on the role of mobilization and opportunities, partly based on empirical evidence stating that the effect of resources and motivations is relatively small when a strong mobilization factor is present (Leighly 1995). This kind of general theories about the relation between the different factors is however challenged by those who argue that the kind of motivation and resources that are needed and the relation between them are dependent on the form of participation and the issue at hand (Adman 2008, Kriesi & Westholm 2007, Sen 2005). For example, voting has been proven to be less demanding of political interest and skills than for example party involvement, and consumer participation is stated to be much more reliant on civic duties than most other forms of participation (Armingeon 2007).

In the coming section I will discuss more specifically what content that could be ascribed to these very general concepts of motivation and capacity and also how they could be interpreted in the context of sustainable consumerism.

## Motivation for sustainable consumption

When you are satisfied with something, there are little incentives of trying to change it. Thus, being dissatisfied with something is therefore perhaps somewhat self-evidently an important condition for participation. And the more discontent you are with a situation, the less affected you are by scarcity in resources (Kriesi & Westholm 2007). When studying civic engagement in general, general life satisfaction and satisfaction with the political system is often used to measure political discontent, but discontent of more specified areas of politics is also used (Adman 2008). For practicing sustainable consumerism, one could expect that at least you need to have some kind of worries about the present or future condition of the environment and other people, but perhaps also that one sees the link between private consumption and sustainable development.

While some studies are limited to investigating people's dissatisfaction, others use more elaborate sets of values for describing and explaining citizens' motivation to participate in politics. These values can be incentives of various kinds, such as the entertainment value you can get by being interested in the issue you are participating in. It can also be an expressive value which is often linked to ideological values. The latter has mainly been linked to protest forms of participation. Interest is undoubtedly an important factor in almost all participation research. It can be directly determining for whether you participate or not although it is a less needed factor when the form of participation is low demanding (Armingeon 2007).

Although you are both dissatisfied with something and interested in the issue, if your stake in the issue is not very high, you may still not participate. Studies have shown that civic norms of participating could be of great importance especially in these instances (Martín & van Deth 2007). While rational choice theory has had some trouble explaining participation by relating it to material gratifications, the concept of *civic duty* has been widely appreciated by these scholars. Civic duties are seen as the result of political socialization, and to "do the right thing" and fulfilling such duties could lead to a *psychological* gratification for the participant. The theoretical reasoning is also supported by empirical rational choice studies of electoral turnouts which have shown that the civic duty to vote is in fact the most important factor for whether you choose to vote or not (Armingeon 2007). The civic duties underpinning a sustainable citizenship might be somewhat different from traditional republican or liberal citizenship theories. As mentioned in the introduction, the sustainable citizenship is stretched outside of the nation state, into the private sphere and over to future generations. It is furthermore grounded in a fundamental virtue: justice. It is the injustice of an unsustainable sustainable footprint the obligations stem from (Dobson 2003). Duties derived from a sustainable citizenship should thus be linked to these characteristics.

An attempt to operationalize the theory of ecological citizens into a scale has been made by Sverker Jagers

and Johan Martinsson (forthcoming). Items for the scale has been derived from four overarching dimensions of the sustainable citizenship, called “Social Justice/sense of fairness, Dismantling the distinction between public and private, Unbounded responsibility, Non-reciprocal responsibility”. These headlines capture the stretching of the citizenship concept spatially, materially and time-wise as described above to a large degree.

In spite of the proved importance of the norms of citizenship, these ideals are not very well studied (to my knowledge, only four surveys has included these norms: “Report from the Democratic Audit of Sweden 1987 and 1998”, “Citizen and Involvement” and the survey for this project, “Consumption and Societal Issues 2009”). In two of these four studies the following ideal was included “*Choose environmentally friendly, ethically produced products even if they are not the best and/or cheapest solutions for you personally*”. The ideal captures important (but not all) aspects of sustainable citizenship. And it was also shown to be a relatively important ideal, ranked to 7,2 of a scale to ten which could be compared to “Voting in general elections” which was ranked as 8,0 (Pettersson et al, 1998).

### **Capacity to practice sustainable consumption**

Although we could assume that different kinds of resources are needed for different modes of participation (as stated above), all resources in theory and previous research can be gathered under three main categories: physical, human and social capital (Coleman 1994). Physical capital is most often represented as money. Human capital is a little less concrete – it is the skills that make people able to act in new ways. Even less tangible is the social capital which consist of relations accessible to someone (or more often; a group) that can help them realize their interests (ibid.). Being involved in an organization can generate social capital by the weak social ties that they entail. Having such networks increases the chance that you are asked (/“mobilized”) to take part in political activities (Teorell 2003 in Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen 2007).

Organizational involvement is however most commonly linked to the development of human capital in the form of “civic skills”. Civic skills are citizens’ ability to analyze, organize and communicate, which is crucial for several forms of political participation. Even though they may be practices for political purposes, they can be learned in a non-political setting such as a non-political organization, but also in the workplace and in school. To write a letter, chair a meeting or to speak in front of a large group are all activities that are practiced in these contexts. And when you have done these activities in a non-political setting, the leap to do them in a political context would not be far. (Putnam 2000, Brady et al 1995).

It is the uneven distribution of resources that explains the importance of socio-economic status (SES) variables for participation, according to Henry E Brady, Kay Scholzman and Sidney Verba (1995). Brady et al measured these skills not by making the respondents take a speaking or writing test, but by asking them

about to what extent they had had experiences that could have fostered these skills. An extensive set of questions regarding education was for example included to measure the speaking and writing skill. These skills are generally more abundant in men than women, which is the most important explanation to why men are participating in politics to a larger degree (Adman 2008).

However, while Brady, Scholzman och Verba (1995) and other civic skill scholars have studied participation in general, this study is occupied by a specific form of civic engagement – sustainable consumption. Furthermore, sustainable consumption might deviate from more “traditional” forms of engagement since it is practiced on the market. The indicators used by Verba et al will thus have to be modified to taking these differences into account. It makes little theoretical sense to include these variables when asking about sustainable consumerism. As pointed out earlier, different resources may be needed for different forms of participation and issues. And skills such as knowledge, know-how and information have also been pointed out as potentially important for political participation (Kriesi & Westholm 2007). The practice of skills within working life and organizational activities, which is used as an indicator of relevant civic skills for traditional forms of participation, might in the context of sustainable consumption be translated into the practice of skills within the private life and in stores. A study of political participation in small-scale democracy activities such as education and health care, in which women participates more than men, confirms that the traditional civic skills are not as important here as in traditional participation (ibid.). Education has also proven to be more important for consumer participation than other forms of participation (Armingeon 2007).

### **3 Models and method**

In the coming analyses the consumers are divided into two main groups – sustainable consumers and “non-sustainable” consumers. “Non-sustainable” does not mean that they are necessarily having a negative impact on sustainability but simply that they do not participate in sustainable consumption as it is operationalized in this study (see more information below on the measurements). They could in fact be people who are very sustainable in general, by for example living in a small house, not driving a car etc. The actual accumulated effect on sustainable development is not what is under study in this paper.

The reason for separating the two main groups of consumers is the opportunity to study the differences between these two main groups thoroughly and with greater clarity. Based on citizens’ motivation and capacity to practice sustainable consumption, we can logically derive four different types for each main group, as depicted in Model 1 below.

## Model 1 – Typology of sustainable consumers and non-sustainable consumers

	<b>Not motivated</b>	<b>Motivated</b>
<b>Has capacity</b>	A	B
<b>Does not have capacity</b>	C	D

When it comes to the sustainable consumers, we could expect with great certainty to find most of them in group B – the motivated and capable. All the other types lack either capacity or motivation, or both, as for type C. However, since motivation and capacity are not studied in absolute terms in the empirical analysis there is a possibility to find some people in any of the other boxes. If the model and the variables are correctly specified, there should be very few respondents dwelling in the C box though (the incapable and unmotivated).

Turning to the non-sustainable consumers, we can expect the respondents to be wider spread over the different types. Since not participating is easier than participating (you only need to lack one of the two main components in the model) the taxonomy expected is a mirror of the sustainable consumers with all or almost all respondents in box A, C or D. However, the model is not totally deterministic or a complete model of the factors needed for participation. There could be factors hindering action even for motivated and resourceful consumers.

### Measurements

The measurements used for the analyses below are based on the reasoning above. Commonly used factors are included but often with a respecification to fit the topic at hand: sustainable consumption. Firstly, the following items in the Consumption and Societal Issues Survey 2009 have been used to separate sustainable consumers from non-sustainable consumers:

*Question 12: How often have you bought the following items in the last 12 months? Bought products with an ecolabel, Bought fair trade products.*

The alternatives for this question were “Not at all, A few times in the last 12 months, A few times in the last

6 months, A few times in the last 3 months, A few times in the last month, A few times in the last week, Several times a week". Only those who answered that they had bought eco labeled or fair trade products "A few times in the last week" or "Several times a week" are studied as sustainable consumers, and the rest as "non-sustainable" consumers. As indicated in the introduction, sustainable development demands a change in citizens' lifestyles and the bar for being a sustainable consumer has therefore been set at this high level.

Turning to the factors that will be used to form the clusters, the variables below will be used to measure the citizens' motivation and capacity.

Motivation:

- Dissatisfaction
- Interest
- Civic duty

Capacity:

- Physical capital
- Human capital
  - General political knowledge
  - Skills
- Social capital

Starting with the operationalizations of "motivation", *dissatisfaction* is measured by indicating to what extent one believes that consumption of products in Sweden has a negative effect on the environment and other people: *Question 32: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Many of the products we consume in Sweden have negative consequences for the environment and people in other countries (1=Don't agree at all, 7=Strongly agree).*

*Interest* is a summed scale composed of two items regarding one's interest in sustainable development:

*Question 1: In general, how interested are you in: Environmental issues, Human rights (0=Not interested at all, 10=Very interested).*

And finally, in order to measure the *civic duty* to practice sustainable consumption I will use the same item as used in previous studies:

*Question 17: There are different views on what it takes to be a good citizen. In your personal opinion, how important is it to: Choose environmentally friendly, ethically produced products even if they are not the best and/or cheapest solutions for you personally (0=Not important at all, 10=Very important).*

Yearly income is used to represent the *physical capital* as one of the three components of the capacity building factors. The second one, *Human capital*, is perhaps the component which is the least self-evident. Civic skills are commonly used as an indicator of this form of resource. However, as the theoretical section above suggest, the traditional activities measuring civic skills is probably not the best suited for this study. Instead of these activities, two “shopping skills” have been included in the analysis to capture the respondents’ capacity to critically scrutinize products that are being supplied in the stores. The question is phrased as follows:

*Question 28: In the last 4 weeks, how often have you done the following when buying food? Checked the origin of products, Read information on product ingredients (1=Not at all, 7=Every time) (summed scale).*

The same logic is being used here as when traditional civic skills are measured: that non-political activities can serve as indicators of potentially political skills. This “Critical shopping skill” is being complemented by an item seeking to capture their potential for political knowledge and capacity to comprehend political phenomena by asking about the respondents’ level of education.

The last component of the capacity factors is social capital. The degree to which such capital is possessed is measured by asking the respondents about their engagement in different types of organizations:

*Question 53: In the last 12 months, have you been involved with an association/organisation<sup>4</sup>? (Nine organizations and five types of activities were mentioned and added to a summed scale from 0 to 45).*

### **The cluster analysis**

Cluster analysis is a suitable analytical tool for investigating how units in an empirical material are linked to each other. Clusters are formed by measuring the distance between the units and creating solutions where the units creating a cluster are as similar as possible and the difference between different clusters is as big as possible. Difference and similarity are based on which ever variables that are chosen by the researcher (Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1987, Hair et al 2006).

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<sup>4</sup> The following types of organizations were included in the survey: “Sports or outdoor association”, “Environmental organization”, “Political party/alliance”, “Trade union organization”, “Humanitarian aid organization”, “Human rights organization”, “Consumer organization”, “Church/religious society”, “Other type of association/organization”. The five activities were: “Taken part in a gathering/meeting/event”, “Taken part in a web forum”, “Done voluntary work”, “Donated money”, “Other”.

A hierarchical method was chosen to form the clusters (average linkage [within group] method, which is especially suitable if outliers have not been removed). There are also non-hierarchical cluster methods which form clusters from a starting seed chosen by the researcher. These methods are in this sense less explorative and even more dependent on the subjective choices of the researcher. However, all cluster analyses are to a great extent the result of subjective choices which makes it important to derive the analysis from theoretical reasoning. The choice of how many clusters that should be formed is also to a large extent a subjective matter. Several “stopping rules” have been developed but none of them is dominating in cluster analysis research. One way to decide this is to look at the average distance when going from one number of clusters to one more cluster. A “jump” can often be spotted and used as a cut-off point, which was done in the analysis below (at four clusters per taxonomy, which also suits the typology well) (Hair et al 2006).

#### 4 Cluster analyses – types of sustainable and non-sustainable consumers

Before taking a closer look at the different clusters found in the cluster analysis, I will start off by comparing the sustainable and non-sustainable consumers at large. As shown in Table 1, the general model and assumption of capacity and motivation factors seems to be correct – sustainable consumers scores significantly higher on these two categories of variables than non-sustainable consumers.

Table 1 – Comparison of sustainable and non-sustainable consumers

	Capacity (mean)	Motivation (mean)	Frequency (%)
<b>Sustainable consumers</b>	1,79	1,80	24
<b>Non-sustainable consumers</b>	1,33	1,28	68

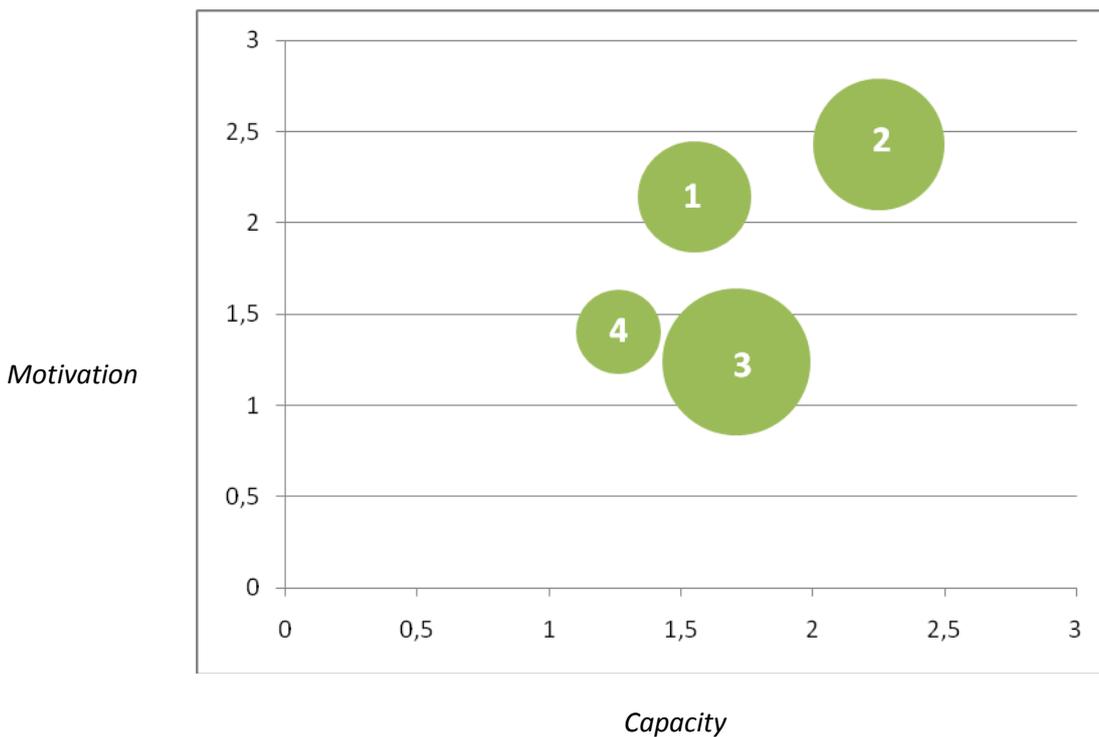
Notes: n=1053. “Capacity” is a summed scale consisting of the variables described under the headline “Measurements” above, ranging from 0-3. “Motivation” is constructed as “Capacity”. All variables included in these two scales have been standardized by setting the median values within 33 % of the respondents to 0,5, all values above to 1 and all under to 0 (in order to compensate for skewness and making the variables comparable to each other). The variables should thus be regarded as relative measurements. “Frequency” has a missing rate of 8 % (Sustainable consumers + Non-sustainable consumers + missing = 100 %).

The number of non-sustainable consumers is much higher than sustainable consumers (68 % of the respondents versus 24 %). Remembering the strict definition of sustainable consumer in this paper (those who buy either eco labeled or fair trade products at least a few times per week) this is not very surprising though. Further comparisons also confirm expectations from previous research; the group of sustainable consumers is consisted of more women than men, many respondents with a higher education and who are

well off financially. The group also has an overrepresentation of people in their mid life (results not presented in table-form).

However, as shall be noted in the coming presentation, there is a fairly large variation within these two general groups of consumers which has not been pointed out in previous research. Let us start by looking at the four clusters of sustainable consumers.

Figure 1 – Taxonomy of sustainable consumer clusters

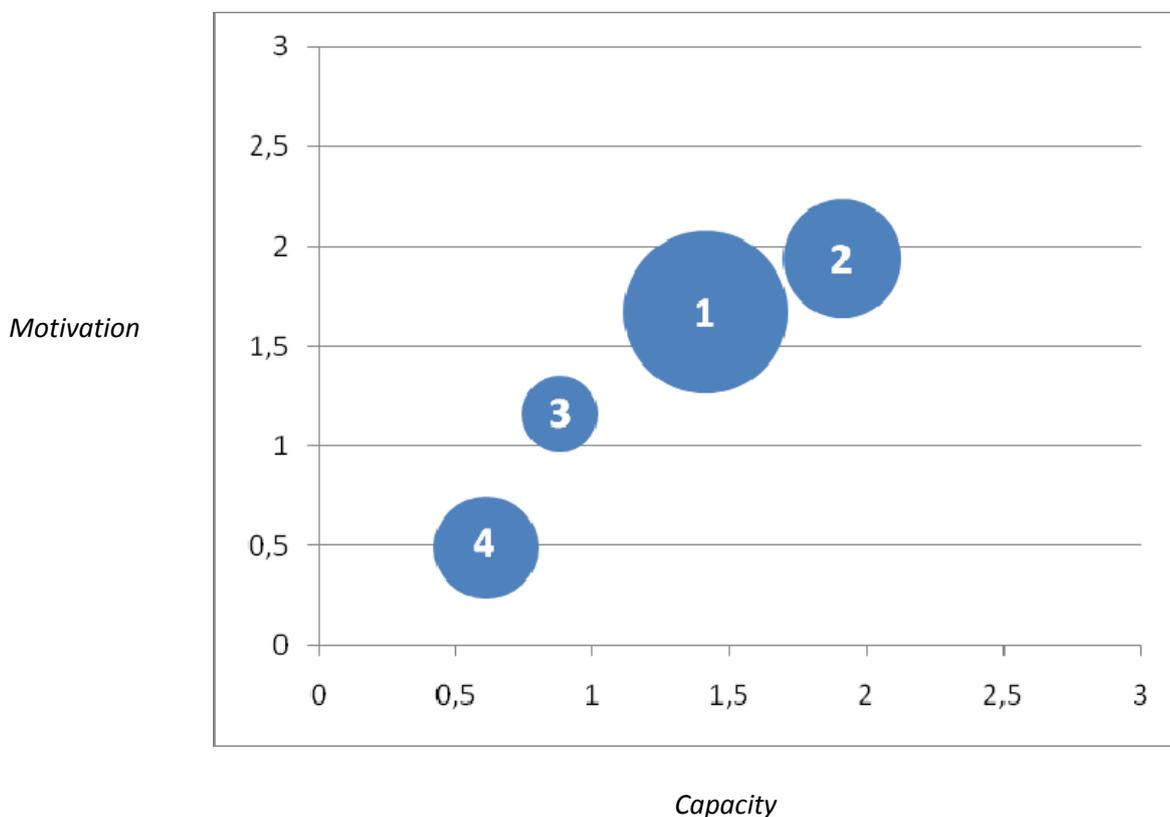


Notes: Capacity and motivation have been coded as described in Table 1. The size of the clusters are related to how many respondents that is in the cluster.

The capacity and motivation scale has been constructed so that the overall medians are also the center of scales (1,5). This means that 1,5 on both scales represent “the general consumer” and the results are to be understood as relative to that number. The figure shows that while two of the clusters (1 and 2) are more motivated and have more resources than the general consumer, there is one group (3) which is not as motivated and only slightly more “capable”. What is surprising with this group is that it is the biggest of all four clusters. It seems like their physical, human and social capital makes engaging in sustainable consumerism so low-demanding that they do not need as much motivation. In addition, there is even a group (4) that have both lower capacity and motivation than the average, which is even more of an anomaly. However, this group is very small and we can expect that these respondents in institutional setting and/or social context is very favorable for sustainable consumerism.

Turning to the non-sustainable consumer clusters in Figure 2, we can see that there seems to be high correlation between motivation and capacity – if you are low on capital, you are generally also not very motivated. It is also striking that the biggest cluster (1) are actually more motivated than the general consumer, although lacking in capability to some extent. There is also a group of non-sustainable consumers who are actually both quite motivated and capable of consuming more sustainable. This group is of special interest in the coming empirical studies of this project since they can provide us with information about the “barriers to action” that may be present for at least some consumers. Finally, the presence of cluster three and four which are low on both capacity and motivation to a varying degree is of course expected when looking at non-sustainable consumers.

Figure 2 – Taxonomy of non-sustainable consumer clusters



Notes: Capacity and motivation have been coded as described in Table 1. The size of the clusters are related to how many respondents that is in the cluster.

I will in the next step present the clusters more thoroughly by outlining their socio economic status, a couple of values held by the groups and to what extent they are engaged in other “green behaviour” (no tables of results will be presented but can be received from the author upon request).

### **Sustainable consumer cluster 1: “The idealists”**

As presented above, this group of consumers is very motivated but only having slightly more capital than the average. They actually score very high on human capital (education and shopping skills that is) but have a very low income (49 % Earn less than 20 500 Euro per year) and an average on social capital (as measured in this paper). Over 70 % of the consumers in this cluster are women and a relatively large degree of them have a university degree (33 %, which is the most common level of education in this group [the “mode”]). The low level of income could be explained by the high level of people on high age pension in this group (27 %) and students (15 %). 45 % of the respondents in the group are working. When it comes to their other values and actions, they often recycle their waste and try to save energy in their household. They are very trusting of people they do not know, and believes that we should strive for a society that is environmentally friendly, even if it means that we have to accept a low or no economic growth.

### **Sustainable consumer cluster 2: “The able and willingly”**

This group scores very high on both capacity and motivation. They have the resources to practice sustainable consumerism and also the willingness to do so. They have much larger financial resources than “The idealists” and are especially concerned about the impact that consumer products have on the environment. They also strongly believe that it is a citizen’s duty to choose products that are not only good for themselves but also for the rest of the world. Most of them have kids (80 %) and are employed (75 %). In relation to the idealists, they are also trusting, believes that environmental concerns are more important than economic growth, sort their trash and saves energy, although to a slightly lower degree than “The idealists”.

### **Sustainable consumer cluster 3: “The ‘Ok, I’ll do it’”**

The third cluster is not as motivated as the previous mentioned groups. The biggest difference is that they do not believe that the consumption of products affects the environment negatively and they do not have the same level of education and shopping skills (the ability and custom to scrutinize the products origin and ingredients) as cluster one and two. They are also not as interested in sustainable development or believe that it is a citizen’s duty to consume with other people and the environment in mind. This group has a much more equal composition of men and women and most of them are either working (72 %) or are on high age pension (15 %). We need to study this group further to understand why they are sustainable consumers despite all factors speaking against such a behavior.

#### **Sustainable consumer cluster 4: “The unwilling responsibility-takers”**

The last clusters of the sustainable consumers are also the most unlikely one. As the “Ok, I’ll do it”-cluster, they are low on the motivational factors (actually even lower, especially when it comes to the duty to choose products with others in mind) but are also under average when it comes to capacity. However, they do believe that the products we consume do affect the environment and other people in a negative way. So they see a threat to a sustainable development but do not believe it is the citizens’ responsibility to counterfeit that threat. The capital that they lack the most and which is dragging down the overall capacity is their social capital. It seems like the other two capacity factors (money, education and shopping skills) compensate for the low level of social capital. The group has the highest level of people on high age pension (17 %) and has a somewhat equal distribution of men and women, as the “Ok, I’ll do it”-group.

#### **Non-sustainable consumer cluster 1: “The almost there”**

When it comes to their capacity and motivation, the first of the non-sustainable consumer clusters are even more motivated than the “Ok, I’ll do it”-group of sustainable consumers, and only has slightly less capacity. This group wants to be sustainable consumers but cannot for some reason(s). One reason could be that they are not accustomed to be critical shoppers and they do not have the general political knowledge which can be acquired from a higher education. They are also not as interested in issues revolving sustainable development as the average consumer. This group mainly consists of most men (59 %) who are either working (65 %) or are on high age pension (19 %). A small number of the consumers in this group are students (6 %). They are not that different from the sustainable consumers when it comes to their trust in other people, their prioritization of the environment versus economic growth or green behavior such as energy saving.

#### **Non-sustainable consumer cluster 2: “The able, willingly but hindered”**

Cluster 2, here named “The Able, willingly but hindered”, has both the capacity and motivation to be sustainable consumers. They are not as well off financially as the average consumer but a couple of the sustainable consumer cluster have a even lower fysical capital than this group. They also hold other values favoring “green thinking” and practise other “green behavior”. Besided the economic factor, we could only assume that the answer to why they are not participating in sustainble consumerism lies in the third categories of factors necessary for collective action (as described above); the opportunities. Also this group are therefore of great interest in coming empirical analyses of the institutional settings that these consumers are embedded in. The group consist mainly of women (64 %) and the somewhat lower economical capital of this group is explained by that they have a high level of people on high age pension

(31 %).

### **Non-sustainable consumer cluster 3: “The curious”**

“The curious” have a high interest in sustainability-issues and also possess a high level of shopping skills. However, they score low on all other capacity and motivational factors which makes it easy to understand that they are not sustainable consumers. Almost all of them are unemployed (16 %), on sick leave (8 %), are students (6 %) or having high age pension (49 %). It should also be noted that “The curious” is a very small group of consumers.

### **Non-sustainable consumer cluster 4: “Can’t and don’t want to”**

The last cluster derived from these cluster analyses is the very opposite of the sustainable consumer cluster “The able and willingly”. They do not want to engage in sustainable consumerism and could not even if they wanted to. Almost everybody in this group believes that citizens do not have a responsibility to choose products with concern to other people and the environment. The cluster has a high level of unemployed (15 %) and consists of more men than women (58 % men). Most of the consumers in the group have a low education (only 17 % has studied at a university).

## **6 A quick look ahead – using the consumer types in qualitative research**

This paper makes up the first step in the empirical analysis of the dissertation project. I have argued that established research on civic engagement has not yet been adapted to the blurring of the private and public sphere and individualization processes. The study of sustainable consumerism as a citizenly practice would especially benefit from an update of the so called “civic skills”. I have proposed to include “shopping skills” to the repertoire of necessary human capital. In addition, I argue that a cluster analysis as the one presented above gives researchers and policy makers a more in-depth view of the challenges facing both sustainable and non-sustainable consumers. However, the robustness of the proposed analyses needs to be further tested.

The next task for the research project is qualitative studies by looking more closely at consumers’ relation to meat consumption in a middle size town of Sweden (Karlstad). These studies will together with the quantitative analyses form a case study. While the individual characteristics have been in focus in this paper, the “opportunities” will be in the center of the next step by study the food stores, the information about meat consumption and sustainability provided to consumers of Karlstad, and the organizations that

give opportunities for engaging in sustainable consumerism.

The last step in the dissertation project will combine the first quantitative step with the qualitative observations of step two by performing in-depth interviews with consumers that can represent the clusters that have been found in this paper. The interviews will be done in the stores studied in step two (or use “stimulated recall” if respondents are not comfortable with performing the interviews in the stores. In this way, the model of collective action (motivation + capacity + opportunity = collective action) depicted above can be fully studied in an integrated manner in this research project.

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## Attachment 1 – The “Consumption and Societal Issues 2009”-survey data

The national survey *Consumption and Societal Issues* is a self-administered mail survey, sent out to a random nationwide sample of 3,000 Swedes aged 18-78. The survey was designed to gather information on consumption habits, political participation, acceptance of environmental policy solutions, citizenship ideals, attitudes towards distributions of responsibility for sustainability, trust in institutions, and perceived environmental risks. The survey took place between May and August 2009; the overall response rate was 35 % (N= 1053). Four reminder cards were sent, three of them with a new questionnaire formula. The response rate appears modest compared with the ones by the Swedish SOM Institute (Society, Media, Opinion), which reaches a response rate of between 60-70 % after 10 reminders by postcard and telephone, and the national election survey (78% response rate in 2006), which involves face-to-face interviews (home visits) administered by the public agency Statistics Sweden and includes also answers to a shorter survey questionnaire to ensure that the response rate is over 50 %.<sup>5</sup> However, our response rate is at the same level as other recent academic surveys on environmental matters, such as the Ecological Citizen Survey (2009) with 35% and the SHARP survey (2005) with 30%.<sup>6</sup> It is also comparable with several well-known and reputable Swedish opinion institutes, including Demoskop (40 % response rate), and Novus (ca 30 %).

Although the response rate was low, the following analysis shows how it compares to Swedish demographic statistics and the representativeness of other studies. Comparing our sample to the corresponding population in Sweden shows a sample bias in terms of gender, age, and education. The majority of participants are women (54 %, versus 46 % men) and the average age is 50 (SD 16.3). Women are, therefore, overrepresented in our sample (their proportion of national population is 50.2 %) as are older people (mean age in the corresponding population segment of 18 to 78 year olds is 46 years and the mean age in the whole population is 41 years).<sup>7</sup> It should be noted, however, that sample biases for gender and age are reported in several academic surveys, including those conducted by the SOM institute.<sup>8</sup> In terms of education, 28 % have college or a post graduate degree (and an additional 10% currently studying at the college level), 17% have compulsory school or equivalent mandatory school as their highest level of education, and only 1 % has not finished high school or an equivalent mandatory school. The educational level among our respondents is higher than in the Swedish population in general (19 % have a college or

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<sup>5</sup> *Statistics Sweden* (a public agency) in the mid-1970s decided to administer a shorter questionnaire to increase the response rate of the national election study. In 2006 (the year of the latest election), Statistics Sweden received a 47 % response rate for its longer questionnaire and a total of 78 % when its shorter questionnaire is included.

<sup>6</sup> The Ecological Citizen Survey is administered by Sverker Jagers and Johan Martinsson at the Department of Political Science, Gothenburg University. The SHARP (Sustainable Households: Attitudes, Resources and Policy) program was a research collaboration involving Umeå and Linköping University and Luleå University of Technology.

<sup>7</sup> Population data come from *Statistics Sweden*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the 2008 SOM survey reports 53 % women and a mean age of 49 years.

post graduate degree and 21 % have compulsory school or equivalent mandatory school as their highest level of education). Moreover, comparisons of our sample with the SOM surveys on point estimates of key environmental attitudes that were asked in both surveys indicate that the eco/sustainability frame of the survey has not produced a self-selection bias of eco-friendly or eco-interested persons.<sup>9</sup> Our comparisons of political and other forms of participation over time rely on data from the Swedish SOM (Society, Opinion and Media) Institute and its 2003 survey. The 2003 SOM survey was split into two subsurveys with partly differing compositions of questions. The questions used in this paper occurred in one of the sub-surveys with a response rate of 66% (N= 1673). The general response rate of the total survey was also 66% (3675 respondents).

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<sup>9</sup> This conclusion is based on the following evaluation. The proposal "Focus on promoting a more environmentally friendly society even if this means low or no economic growth" is more popular in the SOM survey than in the *Consumption and Societal Issues* survey. The proportion of respondents who think that the proposal is "very" or "rather good" is higher in the SOM survey than in our survey (50 vs. 45 %). And correspondingly, the proportion thinking that it is a "very or "rather bad" proposal is higher in our survey than in SOM (27 vs. 18 %). All reported differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. Moreover, SOM respondents are more worried for the future about environmental degradation such as "global climate changes", "deterioration of the marine environment" (87 towards 82 % for climate change; 88 towards 83 % for the marine environment). These differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. When it comes to worries for "environmental pollution", there is no difference between the two samples. The question wording about worries for the future is: "When you consider the future today, what do you feel is the most worrying aspect for the future?" The scale has 4 points and ranges from "very worrying" to "not worrying at all". Numbers above refer to the proportion of respondents indicating "very" or "fairly worrying".