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**The Double-edged Sword of Responsible Living Discourse:
Mapping the policy discourses on sustainable consumption and production in Finland**

Abstract. Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is a topical concept as national SCP programmes are being drafted by several countries around Europe. This article goes beyond carefully phrased programmes and analyses Finnish stakeholder discourses on SCP policies. A discourse emphasizing eco-efficient economy is the dominant one but it is challenged both by an old industrialist discourse and a discourse that promotes a more radical shift towards responsible living. Interestingly, those subscribing to the industrialist discourse utilize also language common to the Responsible living discourse. The article explains this seeming discrepancy by suggesting that Responsible living is a 'horizon discourse': it suggests so fundamentally different policy strategy that it is safe to refer to it without risking own present day interests. While Responsible living enriches the mainstream environmental policy agenda, it also shifts the focus away from the currently more feasible eco-efficient economy strategy and blurs the responsibilities on moving towards SCP.

Keywords: Sustainable consumption and production; industrialism; ecological modernization; discourse analysis; Finland

Introduction

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is an emerging policy field that has the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) as one of its milestones. In Johannesburg, it was agreed that a 10-year framework of programmes will be developed in support of regional and national SCP initiatives. Since then, more than 30 countries have developed or are developing national SCP programmes (UNEP, 2008, p. 3). The aim of this paper is to shed more light on the *practical policy discourses that the SCP concept enables and encourages* particularly in the industrialised countries. To get beyond the polished surfaces of official statements and programme documents, a case study from Finland is provided with SCP stakeholder interviews as the empirical material.

An empirical study that organizes the practical policy discourses can be fruitful in the case of SCP as there seems to be *continued confusion* over just what is or should be included under the heading of sustainable consumption and production. The confusion was evident already in the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro (1992) where some governments emphasized only consumer information while others were willing to question Northern consumption patterns in a more profound way (Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2002, p. 387 – 388; Spaargaren, 1997, p. 121 - 124). Different approaches related to sustainable consumption and production have been analysed by several prominent academics and practitioners (Charkiewicz *et al.*, 2001; Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Hajer 1995, 1996; Hobson, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2002; Manoochchri, 2002; Spaargaren, 1997; Tukker *et al.*, 2008). Many of the analysis are, however,

mainly related to either sustainable consumption or sustainable production. They describe the burgeoning literature on the field, the practical policy approaches, or lay discourses. What has been touched upon in less detail are the policy discourses of those who take part to the national SCP governance efforts. This article aims to fill this gap by picturing the discourses that the stakeholders of the Finnish SCP field subscribe to as well as the diverse ways how they utilise them.

Developments in environmental politics critically dependent on the specific social construction of environmental problems and, in general, language use is an important part of wider social and cultural changes (Fairclough, 1992, p. 5; Hajer, 1995, p. 2; Redclift, 2005, p. 225). For example, certain policy concepts may enable, encourage or hinder the expression of certain facts, views or visions for future. A discourse is embedded in language and it enables “those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts” (Dryzek, 1997, p. 8). *Discourses interact and compete*. Thus, analyzing discourses also means paying attention to the ways particular actors exercise power through trying to impose a particular frame or discourse onto a discussion (Dryzek, 1997, p. 20; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 177).

The research questions of this article are as follows: (1) What kind of discourses are utilized when sustainable consumption and production policies are discussed? (2) What is the mutual relationship of these discourses and how do they interact? (3) Who subscribes to the different SCP discourses and with what consequences? The Finnish case sheds light on these questions particularly from the Nordic industrial welfare state point of view. The case is fruitful for discursive analysis as it features actors with diverse backgrounds who have all shared a learning and negotiation process in the Finnish SCP committee. Faithful to the principles of case study, the aim is not to prove right one truth but to help us learn about a phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 71-77).

Sustainable consumption and production

According to Jackson (2006, p. 4), different definitions on sustainable consumption and production take different positions to the extent to which sustainable consumption involves changes in consumer behaviors and lifestyles. Some definitions are quite explicit that the domain of interest is *consumer needs* and aspirations and the constraints imposed on these by environmental limits. Meanwhile, other definitions suggest that the route to SCP lies mainly in the more *efficient production* and more sustainable products. In Johannesburg, the focus of SCP was placed firmly on eco-efficiency (ibid.). Still, Tukker *et al.* (2008, p. 6) find that there is lack of shared vision on SCP: the current SCP policies mainly address marginal improvements in the economic system, green public procurement, awareness raising and voluntary agreements - not fundamental issues like the growth paradigm (see also Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2002, p. 438; Szlezak *et al.*, 2008).

Sustainability is a central component of the SCP concept. The era of sustainable development can be seen to begin with the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987. As frequently cited, Our Common Future defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development *departs from the terms of industrialism* that is committed to growth in the quantity of goods and services produced and to the material well-being which that growth brings (Dryzek, 1997, p. 12). On the other hand, in the Brundtland Report, the environment versus growth controversy that polarized the debate in the 1970s is partially side-stepped (Jordan, 2008, p. 20). Emphasis

is in the *reorientation of growth* to meet the urgent needs of the world's poor and to reduce the impacts of economic activity on the environment (Dryzek, 1997, p. 129 – 130).

Today, the usual model for picturing sustainable development is that of three separate but connected rings or pillars of *environment, society and economy* (Hopwood et al., 2005, p. 48; Jordan, 2008, p. 20). According to Dryzek (1997, p. 14) there is no consensus on the exact meaning of sustainability; but sustainability is the “axis around which discussion occurs”. It provides a framework within which to reconcile different sorts of interests and considerations (Jordan, 2008, 18; Hopwood et al., 2005, p. 49). On the other hand, the paradox of sustainable development is that the coalition behind it can only be kept together by virtue of its rather vague story-lines at the same time as it asks for radical social change (Hajer, 1995, p. 14).

Ecological modernization: sustainable production, economy, and the environment at focus

As regards broader societal theories that have sustainable production at heart, ecological modernization provides one of the most prominent ones. Hajer (1995, p. 260; 1996, p. 248 – 249) suggests that with the global endorsement of the Brundtland Report and the general acceptance of Agenda 21 in the Earth Summit, ecological modernization became the new *dominant discourse* in political debates on ecological affairs. However, the dominant position of ecological modernization should not be seen as hegemony as the situation in the environmental field is still fluid, contradictory, and fragmented by nature (Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2002, p. 453).

Ecological modernization was first identified in the early 1980s by the German social scientists Joseph Huber and Martin Jänicke who observed and interpreted its development in Germany. The basic idea is that the capitalist political economy needs to be restructured along more environmentally sound lines. As a political project, ecological modernization breaks with both strategies requiring radical social change and those offering end-of-the-pipe solutions (Hajer, 1996). Ecological modernization recognizes the structural character of environmental problems and highlights the *win-win* possibilities between *protecting the environment and boosting the economy* (Dryzek, 1997, p. 141; Hajer, 1995, p. 24 – 25; Spaargaren, 1997, p. 12; Orsato and Clegg, 2005, p. 254).

Hajer (1996, p. 253–256) notes that ecological modernisation has also been criticised for being a *technocratic* project. Thus, it has been suggested that ecological modernization should sharpen its critical and radical edge (Orsato and Clegg, 2005; Pataki, 2009). Nevertheless, ecological modernisation is a fruitful theory to analyze sustainable SCP as it is focused primarily on the reconstruction of those institutions of modern society which are involved in production and consumption. However, its core concepts and main assumptions are all related to the sphere of production. Although it is formally acknowledged that consumers are an integral part of the production–consumption chains, their behaviour is analyzed in a very instrumental way (Spaargaren, 1997, p. 26).

Sustainable consumption and the ‘double dividend’ of environment and well-being

Sustainable consumption has emerged as one of the most challenging and vital policy debates of our time. The discourse around sustainable consumption has become a place where it is possible to address deeper and broader questions about the nature of the good life and the course of human progress (Jackson, 2006, p. 2). According to Manoochehri (2002, p. 48 - 49), the roots of the sustainable consumption debate lie both in the long-standing concerns about *natural resource depletion*, and in the analysis of *economic demand behavior*. A first seam of

literature relevant to sustainable consumption is devoted to the practices of consumers, both in terms of behavioral drivers and the social and environmental costs of those practices. This seam stretches from Veblen's (1899) idea of conspicuous consumption in 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' to for example Durning's (1992) well-known book 'How much is enough?'

As regards the role of *consumers* in making sustainable consumption happen, already Veblen rejected the idea of rational homo economicus that is capable of maximizing his personal utility. More recently, writers such as Moisander (2001, p. 252) and Hobson (2006) have criticized the role scripted for green consumers as such an individualistic conception of subjectivity and human agency largely fails to recognize the historical, political and social conditions of everyday life. However, it has been suggested that on a more general level a kind of '*double dividend*' is inherent in sustainable consumption: that consuming less and reducing the impact of affluent Western economies on the environment is also beneficial to our well-being (Jackson, 2005).

What emphasizes the link between sustainable development and sustainable consumption is the fact that already the most broad-ranging outcome of the Earth Summit, Agenda 21, includes Chapter 4 entitled 'Changing Consumption Patterns'. Manoochchri (2002, p. 48–49) interprets, however, that compared to even the limited things that have been achieved based on the other chapters of Agenda 21, the results of the Chapter 4 mandate are close to a failure. While some efforts to improve the *efficiency* of consumption do exist, a rather significant number of scholars argue that sustainable consumption can be achieved only if consumers in industrialized countries shift consumption *patterns* and reduce consumption *levels* (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005, p. 282; Jackson, 2006, p. 109).

The case: Discourse analysis of the interviews with Finland's SCP committee members

Finland, the case country of this article, has been one of the international frontrunners in making national sustainable consumption and production programmes (UNEP, 2008, p. 22). It is a bit *controversial country* from the SCP point of view: On one hand, Finland has ranked high in sustainability comparisons (Sustainable Society Index, 2008). On the other hand, its ecological footprint per person is relatively big (Living Planet Report, 2008, p. 14). The structure of the Finnish industry is characterised as energy and material intensive. It has, however, made much progress in terms of eco-efficiency as a result of environmental regulation, R&D programs and initiatives by the industry branches themselves (Niestroy, 2005, p. 128). Still, SCP is a field that the Finns consider as one of the most difficult one in sustainability politics (*ibid.*, p. 63).

The discourse analysis presented in this article is based on *interviews with the members of Finland's committee on sustainable consumption and production*. The committee consisted of some 40 people who represented various ministries but also other stakeholders of the SCP field such as business and industry, labour unions, environmental organizations and research institutes (Committee on Sustainable Consumption and Production, 2005). The committee members deliberated for one and a half years to come to a consensual proposal for Finland's SCP programme. The 20 focused interviews concentrated on certain themes such as the provisions of the Finnish SCP programme and the dynamics of the policy field.

The concept of discourse is used in a range of meanings and there are also many versions of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 175). The approach utilized in this article borrows from Dryzek (1997, p. 8) who defines a discourse simply as "a shared way of apprehending the world". In the analysis model of Dryzek, each environmental

discourse constructs stories from the following elements: (1) basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed; (2) assumptions about natural relationships; (3) agents and their motives; (4) and key metaphors and other rhetorical devices (ibid., p. 16–18). When tracking the discourses, the aim was to find these elements from the empirical material and to see, by using also the theoretical knowledge about the field, what kind of *stories or accounts* they would make. In addition, analysis was made on the *relationships* between different discourses and their dominance over the others (Hajer, 1995, p. 44). Further, it was found out *who* of the interviewees subscribe to the different discourses and with what consequences.

Analyzing discourses on sustainable consumption and production

When making the analysis, one of the most striking features of the interview material was the great *variety* of ways that the term sustainability was used. The generally shared idea was that sustainability means taking into account the three or four pillars, the ecological, economic, social and, as some added, cultural dimension of sustainability (Hopwood *et al.*, 2005; Jordan, 2008). However, the material showed a number of ways to *weight certain pillars over others*. For example, Finland was characterized both as a model country for sustainable development and as a predator that makes others pay environmental and social price for its prosperity. Thus, visible was how sustainable development allows for different interest groups or sector-representatives to package their message and interests as something that promotes sustainability.

The dominant discourse: Eco-efficient economy

In Germany, regions that have improved their eco-efficiency ... for example also employment rate is better, economy goes fine. And regions that have traditional heavy industry are not bearing out. ... That kind of far-reaching structural adjustment programme would be needed. (I01)

Unsurprisingly, Eco-efficient economy discourse was the dominant (Hajer, 1995, p. 44) SCP policy discourse in the interviews. Its dominance could be noticed by the fact that it was subscribed to by many and recognized by all of the interviewees. Further, many positioned themselves in relation to the Eco-efficient economy discourse and it became also the main discourse of Finland's SCP programme.

Eco-efficient economy discourse is based on the notions that there can be win-win relationships in promoting economic growth and obeying environmental limits. The supposition is that *fixing environmental problems is also economically beneficial*, at least in the long term. Further, it promotes restructuration of the political economy along more environmentally sound lines by an ecological tax-reform. In general, it sees markets as an important forum and mechanism for change. Alongside governments, business is a key player in Eco-efficient economy discourse and the development of environmentally sound technology is an important part of the solution package. This links the discourse firmly to the *production* dimension of the SCP concept.

As already the name reveals, the societal vision of the Eco-efficient economy discourse includes emphasis on energy and material *efficiency* as well as on life-cycle thinking. The goal is to decouple the environmental consequences from the economic growth. To sum up, Eco-efficient economy discourse follows the main lines of argument of the general ecological modernization theory (Dryzek, 1997; Hajer, 1995; Spaargaren, 1997) and it has a rather strong change-oriented focus. Still, considering the complexity of promoting particularly sustainable

consumption (Jackson, 2006), it can be asked whether its analysis and tools are a bit too mechanistic and technocratic.

An old challenger: Industrial welfare state discourse

Finland is a raw-material intensive country the well-being of which, in our opinion, is based on successful export industry If that suffers ... so we think that it will affect our well-being in Finland. (I09)

A discourse that attempts to challenge the dominant position of Eco-efficient economy is the old discourse of Industrial welfare state. In that, the core idea is that meeting human needs and *promoting welfare requires strong economy*. The flexible nature of the sustainability concept allows for the Industrial welfare state discourse to play down environmental aspects. The idea is that *environmental problems are not that serious in the Finnish context*. Finland as well as the domestic industry are presented as model pupils for sustainable development. Meanwhile, the importance of fostering the economy and welfare is stressed as they are seen to be under pressures, particularly because of globalisation.

Interesting is that while Finland is pictured as an environmental frontrunner, it is still seen to be *unable to benefit from the greening of economy and technology*: Finland is and will be a raw-material intensive country the wellbeing of which is based on energy-consuming export industry. Thus, the goal in promoting sustainable consumption and production is largely to defend the current status. And if some changes are needed on international level, there is no reason for a small country like Finland to play too brave.

Industrial welfare state discourse promotes some of the core ideas of *industrialism* (Dryzek, 1997). In addition, it demonstrates how the welfare state discourse can encourage those worried about social services to form coalitions with those interested in stronger economic growth. Of the interviewees, all the representatives of producers did subscribe to this discourse. In addition, there were actors with strong background in social sector or economics who supported the logics of the discourse to some extent. However, the majority of the interviewees did not subscribe to this discourse personally even though some noticed that it exists. On the other hand, those who strongly subscribed to Industrial welfare state rejected particularly the Eco-efficient economy discourse.

A novel horizon: Responsible living

[W]hat is aspired is also the wellbeing of people, not in economic sense but perhaps more like joy and happiness. And I don't remember how we put it ... it was less stuff and more life quality. That, in my opinion, kind of pictures the goal the society could set for itself. (I08)

What challenges the well-being ideals of Industrial welfare state discourse is the discourse of Responsible living. It proposes that promoting environmental sustainability in consumption and production would be beneficial also for the people. What essentially characterizes the Responsible living discourse is the logic that in a country like Finland *less stuff means more life quality*. On the other hand, environmental concerns have a very strong role in the Responsible living discourse. The ever-increasing global *flow of material consumption* is seen as a worrying trend that may eventually lead to exceeding the natural carrying capacity of the Earth. As *economic growth* easily increases the flow, it is questioned – unlike in the Eco-efficient economy discourse.

A further critical point made by the Responsible living discourse is the realization of the *limits to eco-efficiency*. In the interviews, it was taken up that while for example cars have become more efficient, the growing size of vehicles has allowed for the traffic emissions to keep on growing. Thus, this so called rebound effect challenges the hopes vested to addressing unsustainable consumption and production by efficiency gains alone. In Responsible living discourse, ecologically sound production and products were seen as only a partial solution and it was emphasized that lifestyles play an important role, as well as social and cultural aspects related to consumption. The call was to change the *values and behaviour* of people. Different thing was, however, how this change could be eventually realized: while some saw economic instruments as the only effective way to change peoples' conduct, others counted more on informational devices and education, and some just deemed the task as almost a mission impossible.

In general, Responsible living notices that it is not only money that moves people, and that for example an enabling infrastructure counts a lot. Accordingly, *environmentally sound living* could and should be *made easier*. On the other hand, Responsible living discourse emphasizes that moving towards sustainable consumption and production cannot and should not be just a top-down exercise. On the contrary, *bottom-up* initiatives, citizen and consumer activities are needed as well. While everybody should be responsible for their own conduct, government should coordinate and lead the effort by for example greening its public procurement practices. The broader idea is that the actual *needs* of people should be taken to the *core of the economy*. In a need-driven economy, services could replace products and reduce the environmental burden at the same time. Other strategic suggestions of Responsible living discourse include preferring immaterial and cultural products over the material ones and tailoring over mass-production.

Responsible living as a horizon discourse

To sum up, compared to Industrial welfare state and Eco-efficient economy, Responsible living discourse provides a more detailed analysis about the SCP related problems at hand: it points out that eco-efficiency is not enough and opens up new kinds of visions by paying attention to culture and human needs. On the other hand, while behaviour and values of people stand at the core of the discourse, there seems to be confusion about how to really change them. This is a potential weakness as consumption-oriented discourses sometimes tend to leave the job on the shoulders of individual consumers (Moisander, 2001; Hobson, 2006).

Unlike Industrial welfare state, Responsible living is a discourse recognized by all the interviewees. However, in approximately half of the interviews, Responsible living was pictured as a rather distant vision for a future policy strategy: it provides a - perhaps tempting - *horizon* but the track there is still unbeaten. Therefore, it is not able to challenge the dominant position of the Eco-efficient economy discourse that provides an already enforceable policy strategy. In general, curious with Responsible living discourse is that it is *subscribed to by also those interviewees whose argumentation mainly follows the lines of Industrial welfare state* discourse. In these cases, there seems to be an internal conflict in the argumentation as on one hand the claim is that environmental problems need to be taken seriously and that we can cut the flows of material consumption without risking wellbeing. On the other hand, the argumentation is still that there is no reason to challenge the producers and the economists to do more for the environment.

However, in these cases, the logic seems to be that while the argumentation of the Industrial welfare state discourse refers to Finnish government and producers today, Responsible living discourse is utilized to describe what some other actors in other times and places should do. This is rather harmless in terms of practical politics but shows that the interviewees are able to consider SCP from many perspectives and are, in particular, sensitive towards environmental and social questions. In this sense, Responsible living as a discourse on cutting consumption levels appears *not to cast as a negative message or to threaten some vested interests* – contrary to what has been previously pointed out (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005, p. 282; Jackson, 2006, p. 6; Manoochchri, 2002, p. 49).

Superseded advocates of the social pillar – zombie productionists and environmentalists

Environmental people ... they just put forward laws ... [and they] would like to steer people to live in big cities, so I find it intellectually wrong as the Finnish citizens have their basic rights. (I20)

Providing a whole picture about discursive elements present in SCP discussions demands that also the talk on single pillars of sustainable development is presented. While the talk around these different dimensions was not extensive enough to form full discourses, it was still recurrent, particularly as regards the social dimension. What was special to the talk on *social sustainability* was the critique that SCP and sustainability discussions in general are essentially about seeking balance between economic and environmental interests. Thus, those representing social interests are easily *left outside* the core discussion. This critique is understandable also in this as Eco-efficient economy is the dominant policy discourse in the field.

In general, what was considered to be the essence of the social pillar varied among the interviewees. Recognizing the individuality and freedom of people, their experiences, views, and cultural knowledge were emphasized, alongside the general well-being. In the surprisingly scarce amount of talk that dealt with socially sustainable policies outside Finland, the emphasis was on issues such as poverty reduction and fair trade. However, it seems that in the SCP context, the needs of the world's poor, the initial focus of the Brundtland Report (Dryzek, 1997, p. 129–130), had somewhat given way to the *needs of the Nordic consumer*. Consequently, questions on the potentially massive problems related to, for example, extractive industries, manufacturing or animal welfare were hardly addressed in the interviews.

While there were several interviewees who highlighted themselves as the advocates of social sustainability, there was no-one who would have revealed him- or herself as a spokesman for the environmental or economic pillar alone. Still, there were many interviewees who claimed that there were blinkered environmentalists and productionists in the SCP committee. The productionists were pictured as lobbyists for their own narrow interests who would use their considerable powers to block all change. Meanwhile, environmentalists were said to be enthusiastic regulators who present tough requirements regardless of the social consequences of these top-down initiatives. As no-one of the interviewees personally subscribed to these views, the positions are probably constructed as some kind of scapegoats to defend the own arguments of the speaker. Blinkered environmentalists and productionists could be seen as *zombie categories* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 203) that continue to exist in language but not in flesh and blood.

Conclusions

In the beginning of this article, the following research questions were posed: (1) What kind of discourses are utilized in practice when sustainable consumption and production policies are discussed? (2) What is the mutual relationship of these discourses and how do they interact? (3) Who subscribes to the different SCP discourses and with what consequences? Table 1 attempts to answer the first and also – to some extent – the second question in light of this case study. It shows that the discursive field of sustainable consumption and production is constructed in *dialectical* fashion: Eco-efficient economy departs from Industrial welfare state in order to respond to environmental challenges. However, it maintains the presupposition of industrialism that economic growth guarantees social sustainability and, thus, the social dimension does not need extra attention. Meanwhile, Responsible living builds upon a variety of environmental and social concerns that the Eco-efficient economy has neglected. In the end, the flexible nature of the SCP concept allows even the old industrialism to present its arguments in sustainability language. The three SCP discourses and the win-win relationships they suggest to exist between different sustainability pillars can be found from the Figure 1 below.

Table 1. The three discourses on sustainable consumption and production policies

	Industrial welfare state	Eco-efficient economy	Responsible living
Definition of the current situation	Finland as a model country for sustainable development.	Finland facing the global challenge of environmental problems.	Ecological limits, logics of growth and social culture of materialism as problems.
Need for change and the way to change things	No. Rather there is the need to defend the status quo.	Yes. Eco-efficient technology and products should be promoted by incorporating the environmental costs into economy.	Yes. But eco-efficiency is not enough – changes in peoples' values and behaviour are needed.
Desirable future vision	Even more prosperous and socially sustainable welfare state.	Growing but eco-efficient economy with environmentally sound product life-cycles.	Newly structured economy that departs from needs and provides services.
The component that most firmly links the discourse to the SCP concept	Restricted definition of sustainability	(Sustainable) production	(Sustainable) consumption
Discursive roots (win-win)	Social and economic sustainability, industrialism (economic-social)	Ecological modernization (ecological-economic)	Critique of consumer society, limits to growth, sustainable consumption (ecological-social)
Critical reflection	Fails to take the environmental concerns into serious consideration. Enables for the representatives of social and economic interests to defend the status quo.	Offers a clear and practical approach to solving broad-ranging environmental problems. Still, view on society and consumption too mechanistic and technocratic.	Includes a more thorough analysis about social life and human needs. Ideas about how to really change things somewhat undeveloped.

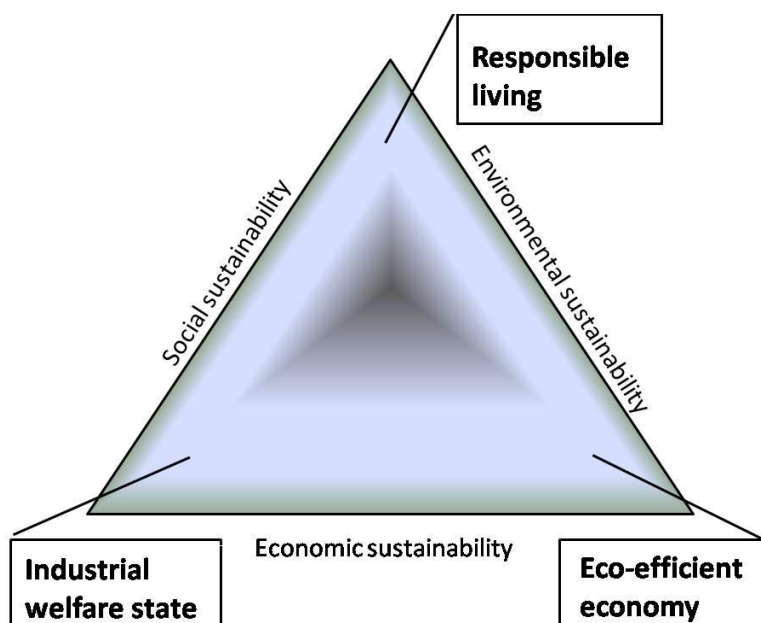


Figure 1. The three discourses on sustainable consumption and production policies

The analysis affirms that discourses familiar from the previous literature on sustainable development, ecological modernization, and sustainable consumption still hold important positions in the SCP policy field. Moreover, it shows that also the old Industrial welfare state discourse persists. Still, industrialism is scarcely mentioned in the current SCP literature that concentrates more on the battle between environmental transition and reform (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Tukker *et al.*, 2008).

Some of the most interesting results of this study were got when it was analyzed which actors utilize which SCP discourses, thus answering the third research question. In this regard, the main finding is that the key *representatives of economic interests skirt around the dominant Eco-efficient economy discourse*. They subscribe to Industrial welfare state discourse but surprisingly also to Responsible living discourse. What seems to explain this seeming controversy is that as Eco-efficient economy is the dominant discourse, it has considerable power for change behind it. Moreover, it demands change from the producers of today and even goes on to claim that it is for their own good. If producers do not agree, Eco-efficient economy seriously threatens their position. Still, in sustainability discussions it is difficult to deny all environmental concerns. In this situation, *Responsible living* provides a good alternative to subscribe to. It sounds fresh and radical but, as a *horizon discourse*, its capabilities to bring about change are currently more restricted than those of the Eco-efficient economy. Important is, however, that this finding challenges the ideas that particularly policy discourses and strategies such as Responsible living would be opposed to by vested interests (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Jackson, 2006). Whether this is a signal of change or, rather, a reflection of clever discursive strategies, remains to be seen.

As pointed out in the theory section above, the troubles related to sustainable consumption policies have been noticed in many studies. However, the critique has mainly concentrated on the following issues: that promoting sustainable consumption easily end up being only a bit rephrased version of ecological modernisation (Fuchs and Lorek, 2005; Hobson, 2006), that concentrating on green consumerism can shift the burden of action on individuals and fail to recognise the structures that shape consumption (Moisander, 2001; Manoocheheri, 2002), and that the practical ways to address consumption from sustainability perspective have been vague and marginal (Tukker *et al.*, 2008; Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2002). What this analysis

attempts to add to this list is to demonstrate that by trying to promote an agenda that integrates strong sustainable consumption or responsible living on the policy agenda, *the discourse coalition* (Hajer, 1995, p. 264) *behind any change whatsoever can get blurred*: it may seem that there is consensus on radical transition but proposals on practical steps end up being more vague and marginal than those provided by ecological modernization. As also some other studies have pointed out, reform can be better than nothing and it may be a political necessity to act within the eco-efficiency framework in the SCP field (Charkiewicz *et al.*, 2001, p. 21; Hobson, 2006, p. 320; Hopwood *et al.*, 2005, p. 49).

Still, it is clear that addressing sustainable consumption and responsible living enriches the current environmental policy discourse by integrating more robust *social frames*, critical discussion on well-being and the complexity of environmentally relevant behaviour firmly on the agenda. This is a welcomed step as the social advocates interviewed in this study had felt themselves as outsiders in the sustainability debates. In addition, discourses such as Responsible living are radical also in a deeper sense as by addressing issues such as happiness and welfare instead of GDP they do undermine the role of the economic pillar in the sustainability models. In general, addressing sustainable consumption brings the economy down to the grass root level of everyday life where a ‘kitchen door’ access is provided for those willing to challenge the prevailing economic paradigms. Thus, by being potentially useful on one hand and risky on the other hand strong sustainable consumption oriented discourses present a *double-edged sword* for those willing to promote an ambitious SCP agenda.

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