



SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN HUNGARY 2007

Academic conference proceedings

English summary



18 December 2007

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

For the first time in Hungary, on 18 December 2007, the Institute of Environmental Sciences at Corvinus University of Budapest, the Department of Environmental Economics at Budapest University of Technology and Economics, GreenDependent Sustainable Solutions Association, the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy at Central European University, the HAS-ELTE Communication Research Group and the Association of Conscious Consumers organised an academic conference on the topic of sustainable consumption. **The objectives of the conference were:**

- to review and summarise completed and ongoing research on sustainable consumption in Hungary;
- to create an academic forum that can serve as the basis for professional communication and development in the field; and,
- to create an informal network of scientists who work and are interested in this field in order to share and promote knowledge about sustainable consumption.

Themes covered

The call for abstracts was announced for the following themes of sustainable consumption:

1. The state of sustainable consumption in Hungary
2. Sustainable consumption and consumer behaviour; determinants of consumer behaviour; sociology and the psychology of consumption
3. Theories, principles and ethics of sustainable consumption
4. Sustainable consumer lifestyles and values
5. Sustainable consumption policies and regulations; challenges and opportunities for national and international policy frameworks
6. Analysis of best practices, success stories, failures and experiences from the following fields:
 - Food production and consumption
 - Households (energy, water, building and housing)
 - Mobility (transport and tourism)
 - Education and learning
 - Infrastructures
 - Media and consumption
 - Local initiatives (local governments, communities, NGOs, Local Agenda 21)

Organisers and the academic board

Boda, Zsolt; Corvinus University of Budapest, Business Ethics Centre and Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Political Science

Gulyás, Emese; Institute for Sociology and Social Policy Corvinus University of Budapest and Association of Conscious Consumers

Hofmeister Tóth, Ágnes; Corvinus University of Budapest, Institute of Marketing and Media

Kerekes, Sándor; Corvinus University of Budapest, Institute of Environmental Sciences

Pataki, György; Szent István Egyetem

Székely, Mózes; Eötvös Loránd University, HAS-ELTE Communication Research Group

Vadovics, Edina; GreenDependent Sustainable Solutions Association and Central European University, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

Valkó, László; Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Department of Environmental Economics

Wessely, Anna; Eötvös Loránd University, Department of Sociology

Zilahy, Gyula; Corvinus University of Budapest, Institute of Environmental Sciences

Conference outcomes

The academic committee of the conference received about forty abstracts for evaluation, of which twenty-five were accepted for presentation. In the end, sixteen full papers were submitted and nineteen presentations delivered in five conference sessions. On the conference day we had 130 registered visitors from academic institutions, civil organisations, governmental bodies and from the media. Conference proceedings in their original language can be downloaded from:

www.tve.hu/attachment/file/7/ffkonf_program_1217.pdf

www.greendependent.org/konferencia/Kotet_vegleges_dec20.pdf

Sustainability principles on the site

Conference organisers committed themselves to organising the event in the most sustainable way. The conference was held in the historic building of the Corvinus University of Budapest, which is in the downtown area of Budapest and easy to access by public transport. Catering services for the conference were provided by a social enterprise committed to community-supported agriculture (CSA); the conference lunch was a vegetarian meal prepared from organic ingredients. Coffee and tea were provided as in-kind contributions from fair trade retailers and from an organic bakery. No plastic cups or plates were used. Conference materials were printed on recycled paper and the proceedings were made available in electronic format.

Further information

Emese Gulyás and Edina Vadovics, konferencia@tve.hu

ABSTRACTS

SESSION A1: THEORIES, PRINCIPLES AND ETHICS OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Title: Corporate Responsibility - Consumers' Responsibility
Author: Györi, Zsuzsanna, zs.gyori@uni-corvinus.hu
Business Ethics Centre Corvinus University of Budapest

Breaking with classical stakeholder theory, the author emphasizes that ethical business and Corporate Social Responsibility is not exclusively the responsibility of corporations, but also of consumers, the government and the media. The statements of the paper are based on a UNDP-financed research project carried out in the spring of 2007. The aim of the project was to map the chief actors and activities, the main drivers and obstacles to the spread of CSR in Hungary. We interviewed corporate managers and some of the main NGOs, and represent the situation from their points of view based on this empirical research.

Corporate attitudes toward social responsibility determine the manner of consumer responsibility and the efficient method of sustainable, conscious consumption. Hence, corporate activity has to be transparent and accountable. Since, during the flow of information the recipient is as important an actor as the sender, consumers should be open to receiving, interpreting and processing information. This of course, demands financial and non-financial costs – the price of obtaining information. Corporations should make an effort to decrease this price through their own methods of comprehensively informing consumers. However, such efforts are unlikely to reduce the price to zero; and this is why consumers are responsible for making sacrifices too.

About the author:

Zsuzsanna Györi is a PhD candidate in the Business Ethics Centre of Corvinus University of Budapest. Her research field is values-based management.

Title: Materialism and environmental awareness. Introducing a primary research project
Author: Kenéz, András, kenez.andras@mutf.hu
Budapest University of Technology and Economics

The wide availability of material resources and a change in the role of consumption draws attention to material values. Materialism and people's relation to material goods - as well as the role these goods play within our motivation – are the subjects of extensive studies. Our study presents the results of primary research in which we examined the correlation between level of materialism and purchasing decisions. The research was based on product feature choice. An important aspect of sustainable consumption is the extent to which consumers consider issues that may reduce the negative impacts of consumption.

Title: A precondition for sustainable consumption: environmentally aware individual behaviour
Author: Nemcsicsné Zsóka, Ágnes, agnes.zsoka@uni-corvinus.hu
Corvinus University of Budapest, Department of Environmental Economics and Technology

One of the crucial conditions of realising sustainable consumption is the development of environmental awareness in people – both in individuals and in smaller or bigger communities or

in whole societies. The study deals with individuals' environmentally-aware behaviour and its components and interrelationships, as well as examining the most relevant factors influencing (or often hindering) our behaviour. The five most important components of environmental awareness are: environmental knowledge, environmental values, attitudes, willingness to act and actual behaviour. Using the literature we illustrate and evaluate the approaches regarding the process of shaping of pro-environmental behaviour. Internal and external aspects promoting or blocking our environmentally-aware behaviour will also be analysed in detail. Subsequently, research findings detailing the consumer behaviour of first-year university students will be interpreted.

About the author:

The main research area of the author is corporate environmental awareness (over the last 10 years), as well as pro-environmental behaviour and sustainable consumption of individuals and society (recently). The author leads courses (both in English and in Hungarian) in corporate environmental management and environmental economics at CUB.

**SESSION B1: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION POLICIES AND REGULATIONS;
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF NATIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

Title: National Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Strategies in the EU – A comparative review of selected cases by the ETC/RWM – EEA and outline on the SCP part of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of Hungary

Author: Szlezák, József, JSzlezak@rec.org
Regional Environmental Centre

In the first part of the paper the main conclusions of the study “*National Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Strategies in the EU – a comparative review of selected cases*” are outlined. The following main topics are discussed: EU Member States that have already prepared SCP framework of programmes and action plans etc. (thematic SCP strategies) or integrated SCP as a key component into national sustainable development strategies; objectives, tools and areas of implementation in the foci of strategies; targets and indicators set for the monitoring of strategy; and lastly, main responsibilities in the preparation and implementation of strategies (e.g. coordination).

In the second part, a review of the areas of action under the priority theme “sustainable production processes and consumption patterns” in the national sustainable development strategy of Hungary is provided; furthermore, they are contrasted with the main findings of the study referred to in the first part.

About the author:

Jozsef Szlezak is project manager in sustainable consumption and production (SCP) at the Regional Environmental Centre's (REC) Environmental Policy Department.

Title: Green public procurement: opportunity and reality

Author: Szuppinger, Péter, PSzuppinger@rec.org
Regional Environmental Centre

In the 1970s and 1980s, private individuals and also decision-makers blamed producers for environmental pollution and tried to regulate them through end-of-pipe methods. Slowly, it has become clear that business basically satisfies consumers' needs. The first eco-labels from the 1980s tried to make people realize that their role is also important, as by choosing environmentally-friendly products they could contribute to the reduction of pollution.

In EU Member States, the value of public procurement is around 15% of GDP (the EU average is 16%). The preconditions for the spread of green public procurement are the existence of a suitable legal background, as well as products and services made available on the market. For researchers (and for decision makers as well) it is always interesting and important to know how procurers make use of these possibilities, and, of course, it is crucial to know how results can be measured and which methods and tools can be used to best monitor and evaluate the process. In this paper we provide a picture of the ideas, plans and methods for measuring, monitoring and evaluating green public procurement.

In the first part, we introduce the methodology and the results of the survey prepared for the European Commission in 2005. In the second part, we present our comments on this survey and our suggestions for elaborating a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system.

Title: Opportunities and barriers to reducing climate change on the local municipal level: international and Hungarian experiences
Author: Czako, Veronika, czako_veronika@phd.ceu.hu
Central European University, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

The behaviour and choices of individual consumers play a key role in climate change mitigation. Local municipalities govern at a level closest to that which people relate to. Municipalities, while carrying out their tasks, have the opportunity to influence environmental awareness and knowledge about climate change. The article introduces the most important tasks of local governments, and the connection between these tasks and the spheres of municipal action that are connected to climate change policy. Motivating factors and barriers to consumer behaviour influencing local climate change policy are outlined, followed by international examples of such policies and programmes. The analysis of the case of the Hungarian city of Székesfehérvár follows, with respect to initiatives connected to climate change policy, and their influence on related consumer behaviour.

About the author:

Veronika Czako has an academic background in economic policy and is currently a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of the Central European University. Her current research focuses on climate change mitigation and adaptation policy at the local municipal level.

Title: The message of and lessons learnt from bottom-up initiatives (“creative communities”) for sustainable consumption policy and research – Is it possible to achieve the same level of well-being with lower ecological footprints?
Author: Vadovics, Edina, vadovics@invitel.hu
Central European University, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

The most important objective of the study is to address, both at the theoretical and the practical level, the question of whether it is possible to have the same or higher quality of life with a reduced ecological footprint. Thus, the study considers sustainable consumption from the point of view of the role it plays in achieving well-being.

The research examines how the concept of sustainable consumption developed, how policy documents prepared mainly by international organisations interpret it and what kind of tools they propose in order to motivate the transition to more sustainable consumption patterns and levels. The main conclusion of this short review is that, so far, mainly top-down measures have been used, which, on the one hand, have not resulted in more sustainable lifestyles, and on the other, have not facilitated the reconsideration of the relationship between consumption and well-being.

For this reason the study introduces bottom-up initiatives or creative communities that were studied in the EMUDE project (FP6). Creative communities help to reinterpret the meaning of sustainable consumption and well-being, and connect the latter to ecological as well as social sustainability. Their most important message is that there is a need for new types of policy measures to motivate and support bottom-up solutions for sustainable consumption and lifestyles.

About the author:

Edina Vadovics is a PhD candidate at Central European University. Her research focuses on sustainable consumption and communities, and new models of well-being. She is also co-founder and president of GreenDependent Sustainable Solutions Association, a non-profit organisation active in research and awareness-raising related to sustainable consumption and well-being.

SESSION A2: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR; LIFESTYLES AND VALUES

Title: Towards sustainable lifestyles: Validation of the German scales measuring positionality, commodity fixation, environmental and social responsibility

Author: Farsang, Andrea (farsanga@ceu.hu) and Kovács, Márton,
Central European University and TerraIdea Sustainability Research

The aim of the present study was the adaptation and validation of the German “postmaterial and promaterial lifestyles” scale. Internal consistency within the scales was high; significant correlations were observed between the measured dimensions: positionality, commodity fixation, natural and social compatibility. Overall, the results indicate that the adaptation of the original scale was successful; the Hungarian version is a reliable and valid instrument which provides a useful methodology for measuring consumers’ propensity for socially and environmentally-conscious consumption.

About the authors:

The authors have their professional background in economics and sociology as well as environmental sciences and policy. They have been working as researchers in the field of sustainability, sustainable consumption, consumer behaviour and motivation, media research and sustainable business solutions for many years.

Title: Challenges and opportunities of Sustainable Consumption: mobility, food, housing

Author: Gulyás, Emese (emese@tve.hu), Farsang, Andrea, Ujhelyi, Katalin

The current consumption level of Hungary is not sustainable. The ecological footprint of the country is almost twice as much as the Earth can support (3,5 global hectare/person compared to the 1,8 gh/p limit) (WWF, 2005). The question is, what are the challenges and opportunities for consumers in order to achieve sustainability. The study examines the trends in three fields of household consumption in Hungary that are particularly relevant for sustainability. The three fields (mobility, housing, food) are analysed in terms of consumer attitudes, behaviour and infrastructure.

According to the research and data reviewed, the Hungarian population is surprisingly “green” in their consumer attitudes. While the infrastructural conditions of a more sustainable lifestyle are insufficient, a significant proportion of the population knows about environmental problems caused by consumption and is open to more sustainable alternatives. However, the attitudes are not consistent and they are surprisingly variable throughout the sectors.

In terms of consumer behaviour, in many respects Hungary is not worse than many of the more developed EU member states, but consumer trends can not be called promising. In certain sectors

(e.g. mobility, household energy consumption) there are no serious attempts to channel household consumption toward a more sustainable course.

Despite this, the Hungarian consumption level is below the Western-European average in every field, from meat consumption to the number of cars. Therefore Hungary has a double advantage. On the one hand, if we manage to keep consumption at the current, lower level, we will face less of the problems that the bigger part of Western-Europe is currently struggling with in order to decrease environmental problems arising due to high consumption levels. On the other hand, we can already introduce the solutions that the western countries apply with success.

About the authors:

Emese Gulyás is a Ph.D. student at the Sociology Doctoral School of the Corvinus University of Budapest. She researches on the fields of ethical consumption, public participation and sustainable consumption; she is also the co-founder and vice president of the Association of Conscious Consumers an NGO that represents the long term interests of consumers and provides information and knowledge on sustainable consumption.

Andrea Farsand has a background in economics as well as environmental sciences and policy. She has been working as researcher in the field of sustainable consumption, consumer behaviour and motivation, media research and sustainable business solutions.

Katalin Ujhelyi is sustainability and CSR expert, founder and president of the Association of Conscious Consumers, member of the International LEAD sustainability expert network.

Title: The examination of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour in Hungary with special regard to recycling behaviour

Author: Schäfferné Dudás, Katalin, dudask@ktk.pte.hu

University of Pécs, Faculty of Business and Economics, Department of Business and Management

The study has two aims. On the one hand, it presents recycling behaviour as a manifestation of consumers' environmental consciousness. Several international studies examined this behaviour in this sense. In the introduction, we survey the reasons for waste-related problems and opportunities for consumers to solve them. Following this, we detail recycling behaviour and describe the factors and motivations which influence it in detail.

The other aim of the study is to present the relevant results of a Hungarian representative survey. The main objectives of our survey were to investigate the general attitudes of Hungarian consumers toward the environment; to examine specific attitudes toward energy, energy consumption and energy-conserving behaviour and to observe the frequency of certain environmental activities. The method was a face-to-face survey following a standard survey questionnaire. The data for this study were collected during June and July of 2005, with 1000 randomly-selected people filling in the questionnaire. We focus on the results in connection with recycling behaviour; the other data will be published only so as to clarify the main topic. Furthermore, we introduce the hypotheses of our survey to present further information and opportunities hidden in the analysis.

About the author:

The author is an assistant lecturer at the University of Pécs Faculty of Business and Economics, she teaches marketing subjects. Her research field are: environmentally conscious consumer behaviour, conscious consumption, ecomarketing.

Title: Sustainable nutrition
Author: Fűrediné Kovács, Annamária, furedine@gmail.com
Szent István University

According to Kroerber and Kretschmer (2001), sustainable nutrition is based on ecological, economic, social and health-related aspects. The main principles of sustainable nutrition are the following: lacto-vegetarian nutrition, regional and seasonal food products, minimally-processed food, environmentally-friendly packaging, pleasure in eating (which contributes to maintaining cultural diversity), and organic food.

By adopting Grebhardt's (2006) model of sustainable consumption, in this study Hungarian consumer patterns are analysed. The main fields of the study are external factors (availability of distribution channels and choice of goods), financial factors (prices and incomes), individual and cognitive factors (motivation, preference, risk sensibility, beliefs and opinions, and attitude to national products), and social factors (opinion leaders, and group effect).

Previous research studies in important distribution channels of organic food (organic food markets, health food stores, and supermarkets) are compared to show the most important differences and define marketing activities that can improve market volume.

Title: Open Garden – a local organic food network in Hungary
Author: Vadovics, Edina (vadovics@invitel.hu) and Hayes, Matthew
GreenDependent Association and Open Garden Foundation

The paper introduces the foundation and development of the Open Garden local producer-consumer organic food network. It examines whether and to what extent such networks could contribute to the development of a more sustainable food production and consumption system.

Open Garden is a voluntary, bottom-up initiative that was established to put the theory and principles of community-supported agriculture into practice in Hungary. The most important feature of the system is that it aims at creating a direct link between producers and consumers of food.

In spite of the fact that the Open Garden local organic food network has been through considerable structural changes during its lifetime so far, partly due to the limits posed by the current social and economic system, it presents a solution that could be propagated more widely. It also presents a solution that is more sustainable ecologically, socially as well as economically than the mainstream alternative. In order to be able to quantify its sustainability, further research and analysis is needed.

About the authors:

Edina Vadovics, with a background in education, environmental management and sustainable consumption, is president of GreenDependent Sustainable Solutions Association, a non-profit organisation active in research and awareness-raising related to sustainable consumption and well-being.

Matthew Hayes is a sustainable agriculture and rural development expert. Currently, he manages the organic demonstration garden of Szent István University and teaches related subjects. Besides this, he is a founding board member of Open Garden Foundation, of which he was the managing director for 10 years.

SESSION B2: BEST PRACTICES, SUCCEES STORIES, FAILURES AND EXPERIENCE IN SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Title: Change of Paradigm in Energy Management

Author: Munkácsy, Béla, munkacsy@elte.hu
Eötvös Loránd University

Nowadays, we can identify two completely different paths in the development of science: the great majority of researchers focus on extremely detailed problems, while the minority, which are as important as the other group, deal with more interdisciplinary research. This latter method can provide new results that are easily overlooked by specialists. Nowadays it is becoming increasingly obvious that natural scientists should consult with experts from other disciplines such as social sciences.

In the Hungarian energy management field the situation is the same. Most professionals in this field – almost without exception – are engineers. We believe that other experts should also be involved in the field. In this paper we focus on the possibilities of geography in the field of energy management. We have used specialised international literature and statistics, as well as GIS (Geographical Information System) tools to understand and highlight problems. We are convinced that we have successfully identified new and useful relations and knowledge that has so far been hidden from the sight of those engineers who are involved in energy planning.

About the author:

Béla Munkácsy (PhD in Geo Sciences) is assistant professor, environmental manager, and teacher of biology and geography. His research focuses on sustainable energy management and its geographical aspects.

Title: Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) for the reduction of energy demand in domestic buildings

Author: Boza-Kiss, Benigna, kissb@ceu.hu
Central European University, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) are a useful tool for increasing sustainable energy consumption. The European Union defined ESCOs in its Directive 2006/32/EC on Energy End-use Efficiency and Energy Services, and obliges Member States to create a supportive environment for the development of ESCO projects.

The Hungarian ESCO market was regarded as a spectacular success story during the 1990s, and experienced exemplary growth incomparable to other countries of the Central Eastern European region. However, the ‘low hanging fruit’ was picked by the late 1990s, even though energy-saving potential is still enormous. ESCOs face numerous barriers to their further development and in succeeding in new and more difficult projects. The residential buildings sector has proved to be a particularly difficult area in spite of its importance due to high energy use and related social issues. Nevertheless, there are about 3 or 4 companies that have tried to implement ESCO projects in residential buildings in Hungary, and we estimate that there are about 5-6 projects running (2007).

After summarizing the general aspects of the ESCO concept, we provide a short review of the Hungarian ESCO market. A project will be used to illustrate both the basic barriers and success factors that affect residential ESCO projects. Finally, we conclude by describing the types of institutional, political, and behavioural change that are considered necessary in order to improve cooperation between residents and ESCOs. It must be emphasized that the ESCO solution is not

considered to be the only solution for sustainable energy use in residential buildings, but if applied in a wise and proper manner, it can offer cost effective and successful results.

About the authors:

The main author is Junior Researcher and PhD Candidate at Central European University. Both authors are members of the newly established Working Group for Energy Efficiency Market of CEE (DEEM WG) that aims to explore, study and develop the market for financing energy efficiency in Eastern Europe.

Title: Experiences and challenges of energy efficient lighting campaigns in Hungary
Author: Boza-Kiss, Benigna (kissb@ceu.hu) and Farsang, Andrea
Central European University, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

Growing energy consumption is of key importance for sustainable consumption. The importance of energy efficiency is further highlighted by its social aspects in Hungary, since growing energy prices and the restructuring of the residential subsidy scheme might place a growing financial burden on the population.

Residential lighting has been often identified as a key area for energy-saving through increased use of efficient lighting. The Hungarian market for compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) was considered a success story at the turn of the millennium, although the use of CFLs still lagged behind that of Western Europe. Since then, popular attitudes and general political, legal, social, financial, and market frameworks have significantly changed related to CFLs. While, since 2007, good-quality CFLs have been widely available in Hungary at reasonable prices and in a wide product spectrum – and uptake has grown to 78% in 2007 (from 19% in 1997), uptake of CFLs is still far from its full potential. This makes it imperative to understand why (or not) people have been changing to using CFLs.

One of the main objectives of the European Efficient Residential Lighting Initiative is to evaluate the present state-of-the-art in residential lighting, and to design a campaign appropriate to significantly improve the situation in Hungary.

A nationwide survey was carried out to examine Hungarian consumers' attitudes, behaviour, knowledge about and use and experience with CFLs. In addition to the survey results, we have analyzed previous and currently-running campaigns in Hungary which target energy-efficient lighting in the residential sector with the aim of understanding the reasons behind previous successful and less successful campaigns, information dissemination activities, and other action aimed at increasing CFL uptake in order to properly plan a pilot campaign.

About the authors:

The authors are Junior Researchers and PhD Candidates at Central European University, and have been working in the area of demand-side energy efficiency and consumption.

Title: The role of the local media in the field of sustainable consumption
Author: Szabó, József, szabo.jozsef@dtv.hu
University of Debrecen

The question of sustainability in an economic sense and from the point of view of media use has an important place in the life of local television. Results depend on individuals; the knowledge of your colleagues and support from management are the two main factors in the process. In cooperation with those who are involved in economic life, the media as a kind of mediator helps scientific results to spread and good use to be made of them.

Research results confirm that local media has to take an active part in several fields and in this way its survival is closely connected with the question of sustainability. In order to guarantee a constant flow of information, local television stations have to initiate projects themselves. In this way, its influence is an important factor in the forming of local community and society.

Local televisions consciously take on the task of forming the opinion and consumption habits of viewers following the principles of sustainability. They do this activity together with other organisations in a given project. Mostly, they are the ones trying to find new ways of cooperation and new projects.

Local televisions have networks of contacts at their disposal for involving an increasing number of civil organisations in projects through placing emphasis on cooperation. They have realised that the civil sector can become more active if the media is involved in projects. Besides this, they can support civil organisations and their cooperation with training courses in the field of communication and strategy building.

About the author:

József Szabó is an associate professor in the Department of Cultural Studies and Adult Education at the University of Debrecen. His main research field focuses on the relationship between media and society.