

New culture for a sustainable long-term

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Context

- *“.....a people-centred approach to the challenges of the European society; economic progress must not compromise the key assets of humanity: the quality of the environment and landscapes, human rights and social equity, cultural diversity and democracy.” — Council of Europe*
- *“Culture is ... a way of learning from the learning of others without having to pay the dues they paid.”. — Robert Wright*

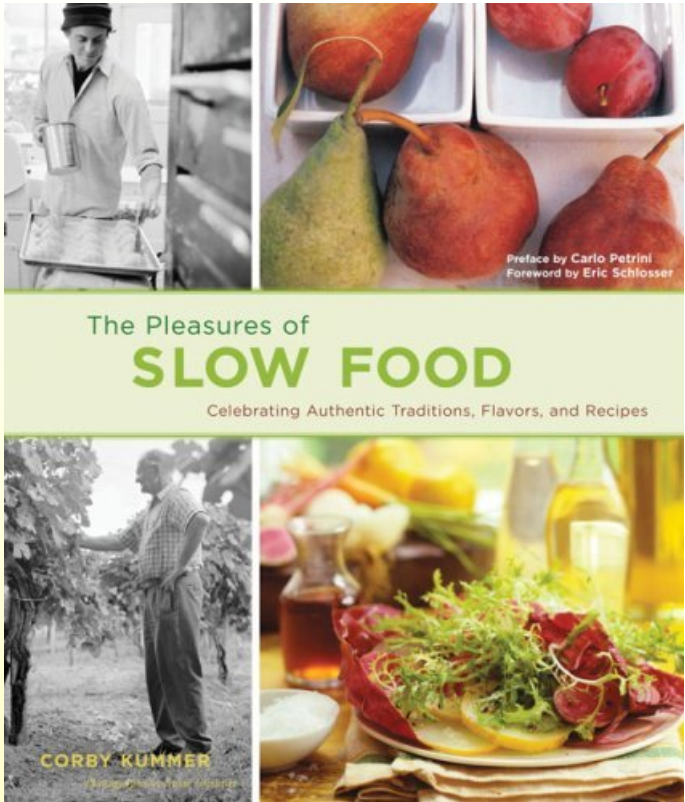
European Cultural Diversity

- Cultural co-operation in Europe is founded on a common history and heritage
 - ◆ One of the first domains for cooperation – Council of Europe
 - ◆ Cultural diversity – now a key element of the EU SDS
- The diversity of the EU allows for differing cultural and national identities while at the same time exercises direct legal authority which shapes norms and values.
- The benefits and responsibilities of EU membership are based on negotiated but shared values and norms and the acceptance of differentiated burden sharing.

The importance of local cultural diversity

- The shift to more sustainable lifestyles must reflect local cultural diversity
- Maintaining a sense of empathy with locality is a vital component of civic responsibility
- Social and ecological activist movements are at the forefront, e.g.
 - ◆ Slow Food Movement
 - ◆ Farmers Markets
 - ◆ Transition Towns

Slow Food Movement



- Started in Rome in 1986
- 80,000 members in over 40 countries
- Protecting traditional foods and sourcing locally
- Builds relationships with local producers

Transition Towns Initiative



- Network of communities developing local responses to the challenges of peak oil and climate change
- Started in Kinsale, Ireland in 2005
- Connecting with community groups and local government
- Networks in UK, Ireland and New Zealand
- Participating towns prepare “Energy Descent Action Plans”

Culture, consumption and quality of life

- Consumer goods and services can play more than a functional role in people's lives.
- Advertising and the associated media-entertainment complex demonstrate this point by promoting lifestyles, celebrity and aspirations that can inform desires and consumption
- People often find themselves 'locked in' to consumption patterns that are unsustainable.
- 'Value-action gap' – the gap between people's attitudes, which are often pro-environmental, and their everyday behaviors.

Counter-cultural movements



- Down-shifting
- Adbusters
- Buy Nothing Day
- TV Turn-off Week
- Indymedia

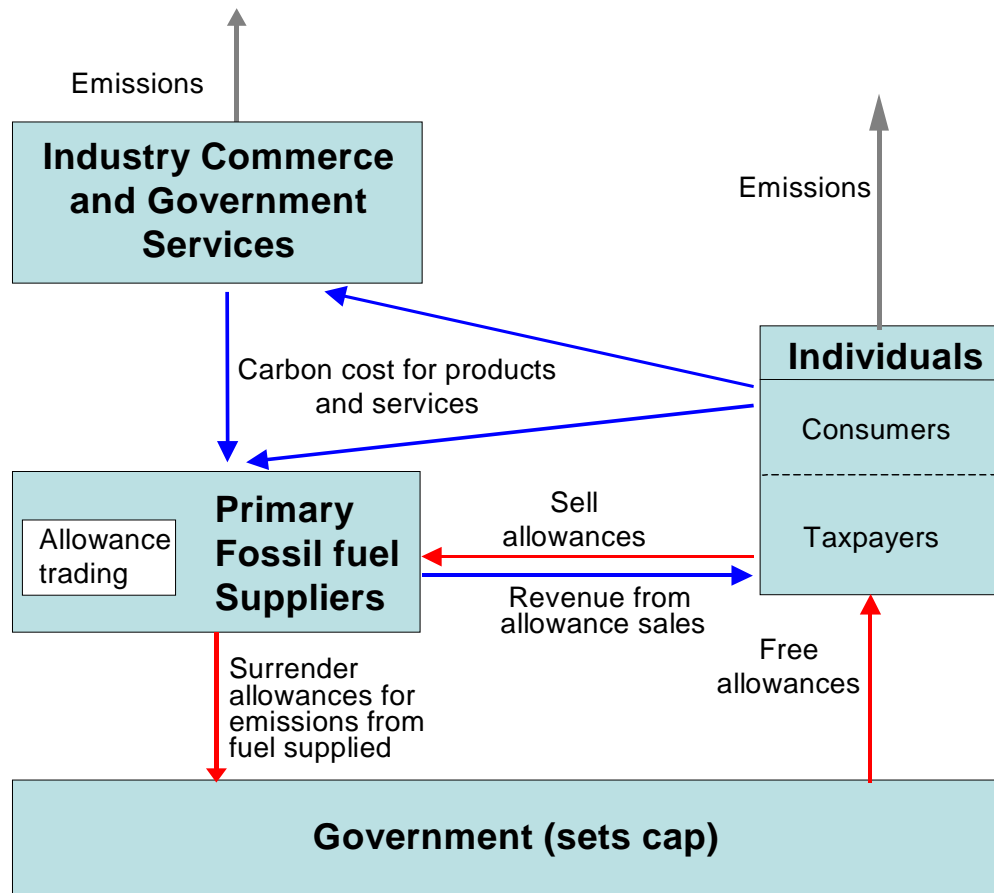
Challenges for policy-makers

- Linking economic growth and well-being
 - ◆ GDP does not measure the sustainability of a country's growth
 - ◆ Inter-generational equity and justice must be key considerations in devising policy responses
- Informing policy formulation through strong debate, on values and identity building
- Communications strategies and new media

Climate Change – The biggest challenge



The Cap and Share mechanism



- Annual allocation to individuals
- Individuals sell certificates via intermediaries to fuel suppliers
- Fuel suppliers must surrender allowances in relation to emissions
- Individuals compensated for carbon cost of fuel and goods and services

Some findings of Comhar SDC study on C & S

- The overall impact on GDP from the C&S scheme would be very small.
- C&S performs better than a carbon tax in terms of public engagement
- Winners and losers - low-income households will do well but rural communities may not, due to a dependence on private transport
- More expensive option than a carbon levy to establish
- A cautious approach should be adopted initially - the scheme should only be applied to the transport sector
- C&S is a single mechanism and realistically the scheme would have to be accompanied by other measures.

Conclusions (1)

- Respect for cultural diversity is central to the European experience
- Respect for cultural heritage and diversity is increasingly regarded as an essential component of the sustainable development agenda.
- Culture serves to maintain social identity but does not guarantee the survival of humans and the planet. However, the basis of such a moral interest is there to be built upon.
- Individuals tend to see the planet as essentially limitless and behaviour and actions are often not guided by nature's restrictions.
- Cultures require a sense of perspective - understanding and appreciating history and heritage builds confidence in adapting to change.
- Maintaining a sense of empathy with locality is a vital component of civic responsibility and working towards a sustainable long term.

Conclusions (2)

- This encourages individuals to work together in their neighbourhoods and towns to establish “communities for sustainability”
- Social and ecological activist movements are often at the forefront in getting respect for cultural heritage and diversity in advocating more sustainable ways of living.
- Policy makers need to address cultural perspectives in devising policy instruments that link consumption and well-being as drivers for the transition to more sustainable lifestyle choices.
- Devices such as cap and share”may help to illuminate how cultural outlook and consumer behaviour could coincide with long-term sustainable outcomes.
- Promoting sustainability as part of the cultural and historical experience of European societies could provide a vision for strengthening social cohesion, advancing environmental integration

Proposal 1

- *Enabling “**communities of sustainability**” to flourish should be a key component of new culture and regional diversity: It is vital that the cohesion and effective cooperation of local people and migrants become influential in shaping future societal norms. Thinking and acting locally adds a sense of identity and belonging. There should be a review of the character and balance between the strengthening of the EU based policy and investment procedures, and the emerging scope for more political, financial autonomy at the local level. Such a balancing process should bear in mind the already differing sub national arrangements for political and economic autonomy.*

Proposal 2

- *The notion and **appreciation of wellbeing** be extended to the positive contribution and understanding of social cohesion set within ecological functioning of the local environment and economy. By enabling all citizens to share the transition to low energy, low carbon, low water and low waste patterns of living and sharing, this begins a process of ensuring better social integration and cohesion. We invite member councils to **explore the application of innovative market mechanisms**, such as personal carbon trading (e.g. the Cap and Share Scheme), which may offer potential in the development of appropriate policy tools for significantly reducing green house gas emissions.*