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The Dugnad: Sustainable Development and Sustainable Consumption in Norway

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Abstract

Debates on sustainable development and ecological modernization have drawn attention to potentials for win-win-solutions in the production of goods and services. The paper explores potentials for win-win-solutions at the consumption level. This is done through an investigation of potentials for changing norms for being a “good” (successful, responsible) consumer in Norway. The potential is presented as an alteration from getting as much comfort, experiences, goods and services as possible out of one’s purchasing power (a narrow household perspective) towards choices that balance the narrow household perspective with a concern not to use one’s purchasing power at the expense of the environment or other people’s welfare (global responsiveness).

In the paper “limits to a guilty conscience” is linked to the Norwegian “dugnad tradition”. According to this tradition everybody is supposed to contribute with his or her time and work to the common good. From a dugnad perspective the global struggle for sustainable development is a global dugnad. The discussion of the “dugnad culture” builds on literature on Norwegian history, participant observation of Norwegian culture and qualitative interviews with 28 Norwegians from the whole range of political parties. The interviews dealt with attitudes to consumption and distribution in today’s world and the most important finding was the discovery of *Homo politicus norvegicus* – the ideal typical dugnad leader.

The paper also raises the question whether an apparent potential for changing norms towards globally responsible consumption is due to specific traits in Norwegian political culture or whether similar discursive resources might be expected to be readily available within other political cultures as well. There seem to be reasons to assume that a global resource sharing perspective on sustainable development might release win-win possibilities for rich consumers all over the world. They would have to give up some consumption privileges, but get a better “earth citizen conscience” in return. Another suggested reason for assuming that a sustainable world society is politically possible, is that rich consumers and voters eventually have self-interest in a stable and peaceful world society.

Introduction

Debates on sustainable development and ecological modernization have led to increased focus on potentials for win-win solutions regarding sustainable production and consumption. This includes “ecological modernization of domestic consumption”.¹ In this paper on the efforts to promote sustainable consumption in Norway, the suggested win-win potentials for rich consumers include a potential positive experience from acting as a responsible “earth citizen”² through one’s consumption choices. Such win-win potentials for all the world’s consumers – or earth citizens – might be seen as a missing link which might bind together the work for ecological modernization and sustainable development respectively.³ In the absence of a global “earth citizen perspective”, ecological modernization might pervert into an increased poverty gap between rich overconsumers (who can afford to buy eco-efficient and environmental-friendly goods and services) and poor people with little or no purchasing power (Robins & Robert 1998:17, Langhelle 2000b). “Limits to a guilty conscience” is a possible key to releasing potentials for win-win solutions for rich consumers.

In this paper “limits to a guilty conscience” is linked to the Norwegian “dugnad tradition”.⁴ This tradition means that everybody is supposed to contribute with his or her time

¹ “Ecological modernization” of household consumption relates both to the “system of provision” (“enabling” aspects) (Spaargaren & van Vliet 2000) and sustainable lifestyles (motivational aspects) (Geus 2003). In this study of sustainable consumption in Norway the main focus is on the motivational aspects of the “ecological modernization” of household consumption.

² In an “earth citizen perspective” the right actions as a member of the global household depends on one’s perception of the household and its members. Is the “global house” (the global environmental space) robust? Are significant inequalities between members of the household necessary for the members to be motivated to contribute with their labour? Different answers to these questions correspond to different conceptions of ecological sustainability and social justice (cf. Dobson 1998). And the answers an individual gives feed into that person’s attitudes to sustainable consumption (cf. Langhelle 2001). A common “earth citizen perspective” might serve as a starting point for conversations on resource limits to growth and fair limits to social inequality. My doctorate project “Norwegians in the Global House” (2001-2004) is basically about approaching (or “interpellating”) people as “earth citizens” and see what happens. The main finding is that “if you treat people as earth citizens, they become earth citizens”. This is not very surprising. Everybody loves solving world problems around the kitchen table by the end of a party with good friends. My research approach is basically to try to establish the same kind of globally responsible conversational setting in qualitative research interviews. This has been done with the help of different tools (a questionnaire with different “earth citizen dilemmas”, an overview of potential “helpers and heroes” in the fight against poverty, and open questions about the informants’ own feelings about the poverty crisis) which together create a space for dialogue which turned out to be an interesting and challenging place to be for both interviewer and interviewee. After conducting the interviews which learned me about the big potential for people to identify with the role as “earth citizen”, I learned about Andrew Dobson’s theoretical work about ecological citizenship. His theoretical approach and my more empirical approach seem to converge in a picture of the earth citizen / ecological citizen as an inhabitant of the global environmental space and whose rights and responsibilities relate to fair sharing of this environmental space (Dobson 2003). We both use “ecological footprint” as a way to measure whether people are getting their fair share of the environmental space. And we both use “compensatory justice” as an approach to level out differences in life chances between earth citizens. Such compensatory justice put into practice could mean that those using more of the global environmental space than the average earth citizen, should compensate those who use less. With reference to Bart van Steenbergen, Dobson makes the following distinction between an “earth citizen” and a “world citizen”: “The earth citizen possesses a sense of local and global place, while world citizens make their deracinated way around an undifferentiated globe” (Dobson 2003, forthcoming).

³ In his article on environmental policy in the European Union, Joseph Murphy calls for such inclusion of “the role that consumption play in identity creation” into the “ecological modernization” agenda (Murphy 2001:55).

⁴ The word “dugnad” is an old Norwegian word derived from “duge”, which means “be good enough”, “be fit”. At the dugnad everyone do their best and are thus “good enough” to be regarded as equal members of society. In this paper I draw very much on my own experiences from growing up and still living in dugnad societies. The local community I now live in (the peninsula Nesodden south of Oslo) is probably one of the strongest dugnad societies left in Norway.

and work to a commonly defined objective during an especially assigned period.⁵ If you don't participate in that shared activity you have to live with the guilty conscience until the next dugnad – to which you will certainly contribute! From a dugnad perspective the global struggle for sustainable development is a global dugnad. So if Norway doesn't contribute we get a common guilty conscience.⁶ The contributions of Norwegian authorities are thus something they do on behalf of the Norwegian people – so that we can all feel that we are doing “our part of the job”.

This perspective places sustainable consumption at the core of Norway's contributions to sustainable development. Such a perspective is in accordance with explicit Norwegian policy. Climate change, production and consumption patterns and the fight against poverty are three main focuses of Norwegian sustainability efforts. By viewing these three main efforts as politically interlinked, this paper interprets the Norwegian efforts as steps towards “global resource sharing”.⁷ The familiarity of such an approach to Norwegian politicians is exemplified by this quote from the Minister of the Environment:

Norway is one of the countries in the world that has benefited most from fossil fuels. This gives us a special responsibility in the politics of climate change, especially with respect to the poor countries. (Børge Brende, quoted from Hovden & Lindseth 2002:143)

“Global resource sharing” does not necessarily imply radical egalitarianism. “The dugnad economy” offers a middle road between radical egalitarianism and meritocratic⁸ individualism. This “middle road” implies social limits to inequality and inefficiency. The egalitarian aspects of the dugnad economy secure a fair share of the benefits to all participants. The meritocratic aspects, on the other hand, secure efficiency and fair benefits to those who contribute extra to the common good.⁹ The state plays a central role in the dugnad economy. Through the welfare state with its universal social rights the state balances the egalitarian and meritocratic dimensions. And through quite high tax levels the state is also made able to take care of the production of other public goods, such as a healthy environment and safe public transport.

Sustainable consumption seems to be an anomaly within this tax-based system for production of public goods. Through individual consumption choices the consumers are supposed to take part in producing globally sustainable development. The state cannot do the job alone. The citizens must take part in a “dugnad for sustainable consumption”, which seems to be a contradiction on terms. The dugnad is a tool for collective action to produce public goods, while consumption choices belong to the private sphere. In the second half of the paper I will take a closer look at how Norwegian authorities and other actors have dealt with this dilemma. In the first half of the paper I will give the broad picture of rational “do-good-ism” and the dugnad culture as potential tools for sustainable development.

⁵ In the article “An Economic Model of Moral Motivation” (Brekke et al. 2003) the dugnad is presented within an economic framework.

⁶ Not all Norwegians will agree on this – or at least they “refuse to get a guilty conscience” (even if they in fact feel a little awkward about this “island of luxury” in a world of poverty).

⁷ What I call a “resource sharing approach” is developed with inspiration from literature on “environmental space” (Buitenkamp et al. 1993, Hille 1995, Carley & Spapens 1998, Sachs et al. 1998) and “ecological footprints” (Wackernagel & Rees 1996, Chambers et. al 2000).

⁸ I am grateful to Gro Hanne Aas for introducing me to the Norwegian version of “meritocracy”.

⁹ These aspects of the Norwegian economy were carefully thought out by “national strategists” of the 19th and 20th century (Slagstad 1998). Since the deregulation of the Norwegian economy started in the 1980s, these aspects have been under constant attacks from competitive liberalism. This has in its turn led to an increased willingness to fight for the protection of the welfare state, but it has been difficult to figure out how this fight should be fought. This paper shows how a focus on sustainable development and sustainable consumption might also give new energy to the fight for the welfare state.

Norwegian do-good-ism as foreign policy

“Do-good-ism” might be seen as “soft” and blue-eyed. But it might also serve rational and “hard” political purposes. For small nations with little military and economic power, fairness is often the best one can hope for.¹⁰ When Norway developed the nation’s special foreign policy, Norway was a nation with little military and economic power. Thus the promotion of “The League of Nations” in the 1930s and the United Nations after World War II was parts of a carefully planned foreign policy to protect national interests (Riste 2001). As a young and poor nation Norway needed international cooperation and peace to be able to develop and benefit from the country’s abundance of natural resources. In this respect Norway’s situation after independence from Sweden in 1905 was quite similar to the situation facing many developing countries today. This fact feeds into the Norwegian efforts to achieve sustainable development: “We managed to fight our way out of poverty. Now we would like to help others doing the same.” But there are also proponents of the opposite way of thinking: “We fought our way out on our own. Now others must do the same.” Some of my interviewees¹¹ have expressed the latter kind of views, but when “confronted” with historical facts about the different conditions today’s poor countries are facing (all kinds of restrictions and rules from outside the country, and of course the debt situation) they agree that Norway has a moral obligation to help these countries so that they become able to find their own ways out of poverty.

Today it might be hard to believe that Norway was one of Europe’s poorest countries in 1905. One might say that international capitalism and communism arrived Norway almost simultaneously. After independence foreign capital entered the country in search for profit from the utilization of natural resources and cheap labour (Riste 2001:81). This resulted in high levels of conflict between capital and labour, and in the 1920s and 1930s the Communist Party was in fact the biggest party in some newly developed industrial communities in Norway. But the main carrier of Norwegian socialist values was the Labour Party. After heavy conflicts between blue and red societal forces an agreement of cooperation between employers and labour was signed in 1935.¹² This agreement – the Main Agreement – is still the girder of Norwegian economic life. The fusion of communal values and traditional

¹⁰ Comparing the English and the Norwegian word for getting a bigger share than others get, can illustrate this logic of the “little brother”. If you look in a Norwegian-English dictionary “lion’s share” is translated to “brorparten” (“the brother’s share”). This also goes the other way around: A Norwegian who wants to write “brorparten” in English is told to use “the lion’s share” as the correct expression. My own dictionary does not give any warning regarding the “cultural translation” involved in this. This is the story about “the lion’s share”: “It seems that a lion, a fox, and an ass participated in a joint hunt. On request, the ass divides the kill into three equal shares and invites the others to choose. Enraged, the lion eats the ass, then asks the fox to make the division. The fox piles all the kill into one great heap except for one tiny morsel. Delighted at this division, the lion asks, ‘Who has taught you, my very excellent fellow, the art of division?’ to which the fox replies, ‘I learnt it from the ass, by witnessing his fate.’” (One of Aesop’s fables, quoted from Brams & Taylor 1998:vii). “The brother’s share” on the other hand, is an expression which goes back to the tradition that the boys in a family inherited twice as much as the girls. Today Norwegian boys and girls have exactly the same right to inheritance (even to the Norwegian throne), but the expression “brorparten” is still used when someone gets more than others. The culturally accepted inequality implied in a “brother’s share” and a “lion’s share” are significantly different and might be seen as symbolizing the differences between a dugnad culture and a competitive culture. The traditional “brother’s share” implied obligations to take care of the sisters if they needed to be taken care of. A lion’s share doesn’t seem to imply obligations, just that might makes right.

¹¹ As part of the doctorate project “Norwegians as Global Neighbours” I have conducted qualitative interviews with 28 Norwegians – 13 women and 15 men – from 15 different political parties. 8 of the parties are represented in the Norwegian parliament – Stortinget.

¹² The Main Agreement was the fulfilment of thirty years’ political efforts to secure peaceful conflict resolution between capital and labour (Slagstad 1998:154-156).

Norwegian egalitarian individualism¹³ that happened all over Norway in the 1920s and 1930s laid the foundation for the Norwegian welfare state.¹⁴

After World War II the country needed to be modernized and partly rebuilt.¹⁵ This became a national dugnad – with the Labour Party as the dugnad organizer. The modernization consisted in industrialization and rational management of natural resources for the common good (Slagstad 1998:221-232). The dugnad leader was “national father” Einar Gerhardsen who was Prime Minister first from 1945 to 1951 and then from 1955 to 1965.¹⁶ In 1945 he came directly from Nazi imprisonment in Germany to the Prime Minister office, and in 1951 he simply needed some rest.¹⁷ Oscar Torp was Labour Prime Minister 1951-55. During World War II the already strong links to USA and Great Britain was strengthened. But US forces did not free Norway from the Nazis – as many Americans probably believe – the Soviet Red Army did. This historical fact – and the fact that the Red Army left the country peacefully after freeing it – was an important factor in giving Norwegian politicians the strength to insist on continuous dialogue with the Soviet Union even during the coldest years of the cold war.¹⁸ With strong support from the people – and economic support from the USA – a “blue” responsible individualism and “red” communal responsibility merged

¹³ Peter Reed and David Rothenberg (1993) link the Norwegian egalitarian individualism to the geographical conditions which made most Norwegian farmers freeholders, and a lack of a Norwegian nobility. “Virtually unique to Norway [1000 years ago] was a body of commonly agreed-upon laws that made social life less susceptible to chaos than was common in other countries” Reed & Rothenberg (1993:17).

¹⁴ The strategic building of the Norwegian state in fact dates back to “the Norwegian Revolution” of 1814: “During that year the Norwegian nation would pass from being an integral part of the dual kingdom of Denmark-Norway, through eight months of what was to all intents and purposes sovereign independence, to becoming part of the United Kingdom of Norway and Sweden albeit with its own liberal-democratic constitution” (Riste 2000:42). With the Constitution of 17 May 1814 Norway got its own parliament – the Storting (virtually: “the big ‘court gathering’” – gathering for a “ting” to resolve conflicts dates back to the Viking age). Grounded in the Norwegian Constitution and with the Storting as conversational partners Norwegian intellectuals used the years between 1814 and 1905 to build a society based on the contribution of all members of society to the common good. This was achieved through educational reform (Telhaug & Mediås 2003), “enlightenment of the people” (“folkeopplysning”), protection of the workers’ rights to organize and laws to protect people from exploitation and to help those in need of help (Slagstad 1998). This was thus a bottom-up approach to the building of a modern society: All people should be made able to participate, and the rules for participation and cooperation should be fair to everybody and should protect the most vulnerable from being exploited and treated unfairly. National ownership to natural resources was an important part of this project. Through national ownership the state could secure that all “shareholders” (the Norwegian people) would benefit from the utilization of these resources. This conception of common ownership to national resources and common rights to benefit from the utilization of these resources is probably the core of “the Norwegian miracle”. This conception is far away from the concept of “entitlements” related to private ownership. According to the Norwegian model those who utilize natural resources for the common good are “stewards”, not “owners”. And if they don’t utilize the resources to the common good, their concession to utilize natural resources will be withdrawn. The concession laws are the legal expression of “the Norwegian model” (Riste 2000:83). In his 561 pages volume on Norwegian “national strategists” Rune Slagstad calls the model both “communicative capitalism” and “socialism by law” (Slagstad 1998:67-72, 160-162).

¹⁵ The Nazis had burnt down most of Northern Norway during their withdrawal.

¹⁶ A coalition government led by the Conservative Party in 1963 interrupted his last period in office. Gerhardsen had to resign after a vote of no confidence because of a mining accident at Spitsbergen. The Socialist Left Party joined the vote of no confidence, but after one month they brought the Labour Party back in power.

¹⁷ Einar Gerhardsen’s son, Rune Gerhardsen, tells about this in his book about his father (Gerhardsen 2002).

¹⁸ Rune Gerhardsen’s tells about this period seen from a child’s perspective. When his father had been to the Soviet Union in 1955 he returned with two cars, which were personal gifts from the Soviet hosts. The big car was of course regarded as Norwegian state property, but the small one the son of the Prime Minister was allowed to keep (Gerhardsen 2002:53-54).

into a big political consensus where all the big parties¹⁹ eventually sounded and acted as different brands of social democrats – or socially responsible liberals.²⁰

In the 1960s the blue-red “growth alliance” was being challenged by “green” political thinkers. Twenty years of conflicts between “growth” and “conservation” followed (Reed & Rothenberg 1993:22-28). As Minister of the Environment from 1974 Gro Harlem Brundtland supported the building of a hydroelectric power plant which would severely damage one of Europe’s finest salmon rivers. This conflict over the Alta power plant also involved the interests of Norway’s indigenous people, the Samis. The dam and plant were eventually built. Later Gro Harlem Brundtland has regretted the building of the dam.²¹ Perhaps her experiences from “the Alta conflict” was one of the first seeds to the “greening” of the red-blue “growth alliance” both in Norway and internationally through the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987).

In 2003 the Norwegian Minister of the Environment is a politician from a blue political party – the Conservative Party. With strong national support Børge Brende is promoting a green-red-blue politics for sustainable development. In May 2003 he was appointed Chairman of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (session CSD12). There’s still some building of trust between red, green and blue actors to be done both in Norway and internationally – and he seems to have the capacity to do the job:

From the moment he took office [in 2001] Børge Brende has stood out as the most surprising, and one of the most controversial, members of the Bondevik Cabinet. He has proved to be extremely articulate on all aspects of environmental policy; has performed almost flawlessly politically; is an excellent communicator; and – most importantly in the present context – has strongly rejuvenated the rhetoric of sustainable development for *both* domestic and international consumption. (Lafferty & Nordskog 2002:182)

One cause of Børge Brende’s success might be that no one expects blue-eyed politics from blue politicians. When he promotes the sustainability agenda the whole agenda gains credibility. He might be seen as the optimal leader of a global dugnad for sustainable development.²² This paper shows that there are many selfish reasons for Norwegians to

¹⁹ One exception must be made: The populist liberal party (“The Progressive Party”) is basically a protest party protesting publicly against anything “unpopular” in the big consensus. But in the parliamentary work the party plays the role of a responsible political actor. In this way the Norwegian populist liberal party has served as a feedback mechanism on popular protest. They have spoken publicly as though they understand the popular protests – and then they have in the end still contributed to responsible political solutions. Commentators from other countries who call the party a Nazi party are thus completely off the marks. In my own interviews with politicians I learned a lot about different possible viewpoints and solutions from the interviews with politicians from the populist liberal party. And even among the most nationalist interviewees I didn’t run into “Nazi values”. This does not imply that Norwegian culture is free from “Nazi values”, but such values do not seem to be expressed through organized political channels. This is in itself a reason for concern. In a competitive culture there seems to be few limits to violence, and the “losers” in the societal competition might take back on society or on their personal scapegoats, such as “foreigners”. In Norway one has not experienced massive violence against society by boys who feel that they are about to become “losers” (such as the “school shooting” experienced in other countries). But Nazi violence against “foreigners”, and “blind violence” against anyone, does happen in Norway, and the worries concerning this development are another reason to fight for the survival of the dugnad culture.

²⁰ The developing countries on the other hand, were not allowed to develop their own political amalgam of communalism and individualism. During the cold war they were forced to choose between Soviet communism and American competitive individualism.

²¹ At least I remember that she is supposed to have said this to Norwegian media.

²² Both his age and sex fit with the ideal typical dugnad leader (at dugnads with heavy tasks). Norwegian fathers seem to be the “heavy task” dugnad people per se. (Norwegian mothers make them go to the dugnad, and women of all ages do other dugnad work which is less acknowledged – but that’s another story.)

applaud such an effort. Almost 100 years after independence, Norway's self-interest in a fair, stable and peaceful world seems to be greater than ever. Sustainable development is the key to realizing this kind of world society.

The Norwegian response to "limits to growth"

The Limits to Growth (Meadows et al.1972) led to worldwide attention on resource limits to growth. Since resource impact is the product of both population numbers and consumption patterns one could have expected debates on both population and consumption as causes of pressure on the resource base. However, the policy recommendations in *The Limits to Growth* almost exclusively focused on population numbers as a problem (Cohen 2001:23). This one-sided perspective significantly influenced the international follow up of the challenge to reduce human impact on the environment. Thus population control was often perceived as the only relevant global strategy towards preventing environmental crisis (Murphy & Cohen 2001:4). Because of this one-sidedness of the debate it has been difficult to get the consumption patterns of rich countries on the international policy agenda (Murphy & Cohen 2001). The situation in Norway has been almost the opposite, and we need to take a look at what happened in Norway after 1972.

In 1972 Erik Dammann published the book *The Future in Our Hands* in Norwegian.²³ Dammann focused on the level and pattern of consumption in rich countries as a main cause of both environmental problems and poverty crisis. The people's movement The Future in Our Hands (FIOH) was founded in 1974, as "an organization to make people feel that they could themselves be the catalysts for radical social change" (Reed & Rothenberg 1993:4).²⁴ An especially important contribution by FIOH has been the creation of an awareness that a global crisis is already happening:

It is a fact that the conditions under which the vast majority of the world's population is living would be regarded as a catastrophe if experienced by ourselves. (Dammann 1993:215)

All the years after 1974 FIOH together with other red-green actors has contributed to making a one-sided focus on population growth virtually impossible. The "population bomb" was of course heard of and debated, but the opposite focus – on overconsumption by the rich – was almost always close by. This political culture brought inspiration to Gro Harlem Brundtland in her work for the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). At one very important point, however, she and the Commission diverged significantly from the views of FIOH and other Norwegian critics of economic growth and competitive capitalism: WCED did not question economic growth in itself, only the *content* of economic growth.

²³ English edition: Dammann 1979.

²⁴ My own life is quite interwoven with the "life" of FIOH. I read Dammann's book at the age of 14 and has been a member in FIOH for 25 years. I have done lots of dugnad work in FIOH, and I have even been the president of the board (which is also unpaid dugnad work) for two periods (1990-92 and 1996-98). Although I have contributed a lot of time and money to FIOH I have always felt that I have got back more than I have given. The feeling of being part of a project for global change has been invaluable to me. As far as I know this urge to take part in global change dates back to the Biafra War. At the age of five or six I was exposed to pictures of the starving children in Biafra. I felt that it could have been me – that I was very lucky to be born in a rich, peaceful country. After that experience I was always very happy to take part in all kinds of work that was supposed to benefit poor children around the world, but I still felt that this wasn't enough. Reading Dammann's book(s) gave me a feeling that I could in fact take part in changing the world – and that another world is possible. This is what gives life meaning to me – that I can contribute to making war and hunger impossible. My informants tell similar stories: Exposure to poverty and/or injustice was what made them want to go into politics. *Homo politicus norvegicus* is a remarkable creature. I think it is the kind of creature that thrives in peaceful, safe and egalitarian conditions – in a dugnad culture.

Such a pragmatic view was important in building a political consensus on the message in the WCED report *Our Common Future*. The Brundtland Report stresses that both reduced population growth and changes in the consumption patterns of rich countries are necessary to achieve socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development (WCED 1987:44).

In line with most other rich countries Norway might in some respects be viewed as "developing country" regarding sustainable development. This is so because today's infrastructure and consumption patterns lead to levels of resource use which are ecologically unsustainable in the long run. This can be illustrated through "ecological footprint" assessments.²⁵ In my work I use the concept of ecological footprint assessments as a tool to give a general impression regarding the ecological sustainability of the consumption pattern of a country, a group or an individual. The implicit precondition is that in the long run no countries, groups or individuals can claim to have a right to a bigger ecological footprint than anyone else. The average Norwegian ecological footprint is approximately three times the world average (MoFA 2002:45).

Norwegian unsustainability: the carbon footprint²⁶

From an earth citizen perspective the Norwegian "carbon footprint" is particularly unsustainable. If the atmosphere's sink capacity is regarded as an environmental space which belongs to all earth citizens in common, the sustainable fair share of this space is 1 to 5 tonnes CO₂ emissions per earth citizen per year.²⁷ The average Norwegian "carbon footprint" is more than 10 tonnes per year. If one takes as a starting point that no one can claim any more right to the atmosphere than others, the future Norwegian carbon footprint has to be considerably smaller than today's footprint.

It might in fact be argued that for other resources the Norwegian ecological footprint is quite satisfactory. Even if the cold climate only to a minor degree can be used to claim that Norwegians *should* be entitled to a bigger share of the total global "environmental space" (Hille 1995), people living in more friendly climates might still find it *fair* that Norwegians use some extra resources to meet the special challenges facing people living in these cold, barren and sparsely populated outskirts of our generously supplied planet.²⁸ Another reason for paying special attention to the carbon footprint is that for materials, water and land there are functioning markets, which will be able to internalize ecological costs from over-use of resources. However, these markets "function" only in internalizing resource scarcity and environmental problems. When it comes to social sustainability they do not work very well because of the very unequal distribution of purchasing power.

When it comes to the atmosphere's sink capacity, on the other hand, pressure on the resource base will not automatically lead to higher prices and reduced pressure. The over-exploitation of the atmosphere's sink capacity thus needs to be "constructed" as a political

²⁵ "In essence, the ecological footprint is a simple accounting tool that adds up human impacts (or ecological services) in a way that is consistent with thermodynamic and ecological principles. It goes beyond capturing biomass appropriation by also including ecological services such as waste absorption or water use" (Chambers et al. 2000:31).

²⁶ The following text represents my digestion of the climate issue. I am grateful to Asbjørn Torvanger at CICERO for sharing his insights with me and to the ForUM working group on climate and energy for allowing me to join the group as an observer in 2000-2001. (ForUM is the NGO follow up of NCED and is primarily financed by the Norwegian state.)

²⁷ 5 tonnes is an estimate of today's global average. 1 tonne might be a future sustainable global average.

²⁸ Lots of Norwegians would protest against this view, and I don't really agree with it myself either. Norwegians might easily live very good lives within an average global ecological footprint – and I would very much like to do it. Such radical egalitarianism is however a poor platform for dialogue with competitive liberals, and I have thus tried to integrate the logic of John Rawls' "justice as fairness" (Rawls 2001) and the discussion on "desert" (in addition to needs and wishes) raised by Andrew Dobson (1998).

problem which needs solutions. The Climate Convention (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have taken care of this construction of a problem in need of international solutions.²⁹ Norwegian actors only to a minor degree challenge the IPCC conclusions and those who do challenge them are in general not taken seriously. To Norwegians the question is not whether anthropogenic climate change happens (Norgaard 2003) but what a small country can possibly do to reduce the changes and damages. In 2001 the total Norwegian emissions of CO₂ were 42,4 million metric tonnes, approximately 10 tonnes per inhabitant (Hovden & Lindseth 2002:145). Emissions from Norwegians' international air trips are however not included in these figures. International aviation is not included in the Kyoto Protocol and emissions from international aviation are not included in national figures. In one way this makes sense, because it is difficult to link international aviation to nations. But seen from an atmospheric point of view emissions from international aviation are at least as problematic as other emissions.³⁰

There's no full agreement on what a sustainable emission level will be, but it is not unreasonable to take as a starting point that in 2050 the average Norwegian will have to restrain his/her emissions (international aviation included) to approximately 1 tonne per year, i.e. one tenth of today's average in which international aviation is not included.³¹ To prevent a situation where restrictions on international aviation and perhaps even car use are unavoidable, the average Norwegian thus has a self-interest in organizational and technological changes which can generate the required reductions in emissions as smooth as possible. One model for such a smooth process of change is "contraction and convergence", which means that total emissions contract while emissions of the rich and the poor converge.³²

For organizational and technological changes to be ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, they must be environmentally *effective* (lead to reduced pressure on the resource base), economically *efficient* and socially *fair*. Internalization of environmental and distributive aspects into the prices of transport and energy services seems to be the most effective, efficient and fair way to approach the challenge to reduce CO₂ emissions globally. Environmental aspects might be internalized solely through "green taxation". But relatively spoken rich consumers are quite "immune" towards the price mechanism. Thus the required tax level for actually reducing emissions is quite high.³³ A global use of the price mechanism would thus have considerable – and unfair – distributive effects because the "basic emissions" of poor "underconsumers" would be taxed at the same level as "luxury emissions" of rich "overconsumers". Some level of tax-free "basic emissions" would thus be required for a global tax on CO₂ emissions to be fair.

In today's world it is not organizationally possible to provide every "earth citizen" with a tax-free "basic emission permit". Instead the Kyoto Protocol acknowledges the need for tax-free "basic emissions" by exempting poor countries from the reduction targets. On the

²⁹ See www.ipcc.ch and <http://unfccc.int/index.html> for information on the Kyoto process.

³⁰ Because emissions take place high up in the atmosphere they are probably more problematic.

³¹ To give an idea of the emissions from aviation I can tell that I paid compensation for 7 metric tonnes of emissions when travelling Oslo-Johannesburg-Oslo. The service to pay compensation was offered by "Johannesburg Climate Legacy" and I happily paid 70 dollars. 7 tonnes is more than the global average *annual* emissions per earth citizen (which is approximately 5 tonnes).

³² See www.gci.org.uk for information on "contraction and convergence".

³³ The German Advisory Council on Global Change writes this on the use of a ticket levy on international aviation: "The environment-related incentive effects of a ticket levy must be regarded as relatively minor. With such a form of user charge, airline companies have no incentive to invest in technologies with lower emissions. Any improvement in the environmental situation would be based exclusively on a decline in demand as a result of higher prices for flights. Given the estimated price elasticities, however, such a decline in demand would probably not be all that great" (WBGU 2002:9)

other hand the agreement also acknowledges the need for an international regime for economic internalization of the costs from CO₂ emissions. The “Annex 1 countries” have thus agreed to set up such a regime between them. The chosen mechanisms to reduce the cost of meeting the pre-specified targets outlined in the Kyoto Protocol are tradable emission permits and “joint implementation” (JI). An additional mechanism is called the “clean development mechanism” (CDM). CDM allows Annex 1 countries to earn emission permits through investing in sustainable energy projects in developing countries. CDM has been heavily criticised by environmental NGOs for allowing Annex 1 countries to refrain from measures to curb national CO₂ emissions. Developmental NGOs on the other hand see CDM as a potential source for sorely needed financing for sustainable development. As an answer to this dilemma Norwegian environmental and developmental NGOs are together setting up their own “CDM Watch”: an organization for monitoring the Norwegian use of CDM to make sure that the use of the mechanism benefits both the poor and the environment.

Both Norwegian authorities and Norwegian industry seem to be happy for this form of help from NGOs. Both internationally and nationally Norwegian authorities are regarded as very “NGO friendly” and this is part of the explanation why “the ‘ecological modernization’ of Norwegian do-good-ism” to which I will return below led to so much distrust and frustration.

Given that Russia ratifies the Kyoto Protocol, the Annex 1 countries will constitute a functioning market for emission permits from 2008. The Norwegian “sustainability performance” heavily relies on an effective, efficient and fair international system for emissions trading, and it is not completely off the marks to declare that from 2008 Norway will be a “sustainable society”. The Norwegian process since 1987 might be viewed as an “ecological modernization” of Norwegian do-good-ism. This has been a very painful process with lots of distrust and feelings of being betrayed by one’s own. Norwegian environmental NGOs felt that Norwegian authorities betrayed the common sustainability project when they didn’t follow up national targets to reduce CO₂ emissions and reduce energy consumption in general. On the other hand Norwegian authorities have several times felt betrayed because the NGO critique of the national performance has threatened the legitimacy of Norway’s role as a “forerunner” for sustainable development. From 2008 most of the national tensions related to the international climate regime will probably disappear. Norwegian authorities are also planning a limited national climate regime from 2005 (MoFA 2002:42).³⁴

Norway as the global dugnad leader for sustainable development

Norwegian authorities in response to NGO critique that Norway is not doing enough often use the expression; “We are doing our part of the job”. And according to the logic of the dugnad it is in fact important that those who are more than willing to do their part of the job do not show too much of this willingness to the others. These “more than willing” people are not able to do the whole job alone. They need the more reluctant to participate as well. When the more than willing people hold back on their efforts so that the reluctant shall understand that they have to contribute, also the more than willing might seem reluctant. For several years now Norwegian authorities have in fact been accused for being somewhat reluctant. “Reluctantly carrying the torch” is also the headline in a recent evaluation of Norway’s efforts towards sustainable development (Langhelle 2000a). In a dugnad perspective this holding back and not doing as much as one could have done, is for the common good – so that others can find their role in the dugnad as well.

³⁴ Norwegian authorities have also put much effort into developing a national CO₂ tax, but an international system is definitely the best solution for Norwegian economy (Hansen et al. 1995:239).

Another reason for being reluctant is that in a forerunner perspective Norwegian authorities needed to get rid of some tools which almost no other of the global dugnad participants were able to use. If you want to be a forerunner – or the leader of the dugnad³⁵ – you must choose a path that the others will be able to follow and tools that the others can use. In 1990 Norwegian authorities probably had the national political and economic tools and the national popular support necessary to turn Norway into a “sustainable society” through top-down implementation. The 1989 national reduction target for CO₂ emissions signalled a willingness to use the political tools and make Norway a good example for others to follow. After a while some Norwegian actors realized that no other countries would have political and financial possibilities to follow such an example:

In 1990 [...] [Ted] Hanisch took the position that Norway’s leadership in the international climate negotiations could be undermined if the discussion continued to focus on quantified national targets. [...] In the years that followed, key national climate policy actors in Norway, such as Gro Harlem Brundtland and Thorbjørn Berntsen (Minister of the Environment 1990-96), adopted the essence of Hanisch’s position. The solution to the climate problem increasingly came to be seen as an international binding regime of flexible mechanisms where Norway could be “credited” with the emission reductions that resulted from Norwegian-sponsored measures abroad. (Hovden & Lindseth 2002:150)

In the egalitarian Norwegian culture there is a consensus that even the richest and most important persons should not be allowed to buy their way out of universal measures that are taken for the common good. The most prominent symbol of this attitude to this day is the former King – Olav 5 (1903-91). In 1973, during the oil crisis, driving was restricted so that no one was allowed to drive on Sundays. There were of course some exemptions for emergency driving and so on, and no one *expected* King Olav not to be driven by car to his Sunday skiing in the Oslo forest. The picture of King Olav at the tram to the forest has become a national icon.³⁶ The King himself in fact looks quite happy about the situation. Perhaps he had been waiting for an opportunity to travel with the famous Holmenkollen tram together with all the other skiers. The tram station is only hundred meters or so from the Royal Castle, and the tram takes you right to the ski track. There were probably neutrally dressed security people around him, but the picture just shows the King and lots of other skiers heading for their Sunday trip.

Towards this cultural background it is understandable that the Norwegian public in general – and environmental NGOs in particular – reacted very negatively when Norwegian authorities told the people that instead of national targets Norway would aim at using “international mechanisms” to achieve sustainability goals. To Norwegian ears “international emissions trading” sounds very much like buying one’s way out of common measures that should be taken for the common good. According to the Norwegian dugnad mentality buying one’s way out of a common task is indefensible:

[...] then there is *dugnad* – which is translated as “let’s do it together”, and which describes the key concept that everyone must participate in society, taking the rough with the smooth. *Dugnad* means that parents arrive in school twice a year to spring-clean or decorate the classroom.

³⁵ The leader of the dugnad is an extremely important person. He can in fact be seen as the solution to the most common dilemma in collective action: Everybody will benefit if the job is done, but no one wants to do more than any other. The dugnad leader *is* willing to do more than any other. He prepares the dugnad, he is the first to come and the last to leave, and during the dugnad he usually does more than the average dugnad worker – while at the same time supervising and encouraging the others.

³⁶ The picture of the King at the tram also travelled around the world.

“When I was chief of staff to the prime minister, I still left the office at 2.15pm to do the *dugnad*,” says Jonas Gahr Støre, the chairman of Econ, Norway’s leading think-tank. “Even in the highest powered offices it’s acceptable – just as it is to leave at 4pm if it’s your turn to pick up the kids.” Dugnad is a symbolic gesture of equality and a way of keeping everyone’s feet on the ground. “There’s no expectation that people in high positions should be exempted. Quite the opposite.” And there’s no question of buying your way out. “Twice a year we do the garden in these flats,” said my bruschetta-maker, looking down from her balcony. “Everyone here could just hire a gardener, but that would imply you didn’t care.” You have to get soil beneath your fingernails. (*The Independent* 1 August 2002)

From a dugnad perspective the global struggle for sustainable development is a global dugnad where all countries have a moral obligation to participate. Norwegian NGOs – and researchers – have argued that Norway’s privileged situation increases the moral obligation to take national measures and act as a forerunner (Lafferty & Nordskog 2002:181). They want Norway to become an international “hero” for sustainable development by setting a good example. The 1989 national reduction target indicated that Norwegian authorities shared this vision from the outset. Despite NGO criticism of the pragmatic approach to growth in the Brundtland Report there was still a sense of a common project. NGOs probably thought that the authorities sooner or later would have to face the limits to growth anyway. But instead Norwegian authorities started to explore the possibilities emerging from approaches such as “eco-efficiency”, “industrial ecology” and “ecological modernization”. In other words, there was an increased focus on using economic and technological tools to promote sustainability. Such a shift in focus might mean a narrowing of the sustainability agenda so that necessary efforts related to cultural change and sustainable identity projects become marginalized (Murphy 2001). The blue-green focus of ecological modernization also marginalizes red distributive aspects, which are not part of the ecological modernization agenda (Langhelle 2000b).

In the case of Norway I will still argue that some ecological modernization was highly needed. The strong red-green hegemony within the field of sustainable development³⁷ had to be balanced by some blue-green perspectives. What I have termed “the ‘ecological modernization’ of Norwegian do-good-ism” had two very important implications:

- Efficiency considerations were included in Norwegian positions in international negotiations. This paved the road for a Norwegian forerunner role in the Kyoto process. It probably also contributed significantly to the fact that Norway in Johannesburg dared to stand up against the WTO efforts to put efficiency considerations in the front seat in sustainable development matters. In the final negotiations Norway heroically fought for a balanced concept of sustainable development – with ecological sustainability, economic efficiency and social fairness as equally important aspects. If anyone needed a final proof that Norway is still able to set a good example, they got it. And Norwegian NGOs praised Norwegian negotiators to the skies.
- Eco-efficiency considerations were included in national politics. This gave the morally marginalized Norwegian “business people” a constructive role to play in sustainable development. “Earning money” became slightly more legitimate³⁸ – as long as sustainability considerations were taken into account. The standard complaint

³⁷ The red-green hegemony in Norwegian environmental debate dates back to the 1970s (Reed & Rothenberg 1993).

³⁸ In a dugnad culture money is marginal while common efforts and the sharing of burdens and benefits are in the centre of society. In a national dugnad culture one of course needs money for market exchanges, but making money with money (earning money from “moving money”) is regarded with suspicion.

from "blue" societal actors has always been that "it is forbidden to earn money in this country". This refers both to strict political regulations, high levels of taxes and a general suspicion towards conspicuous consumption.³⁹ With the eco-efficiency agenda, business and blue political actors are offered a helping – perhaps even heroic – role in the creation of a sustainable society.⁴⁰

"The 'ecological modernization' of the Norwegian do-good-ism" has thus cleared the ground for Norway's role as the global dugnad leader. The best way to read the Norwegian *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* (MoFA 2002) is probably as a declaration from a dugnad leader. The front page illustration in fact depicts the global efforts towards sustainable development as a global dugnad: On the illustration men and women of all colours – and all dressed in dugnad clothes – help each other and serve as stewards for sustainable development. Two children – a boy and a girl – play football in the foreground.⁴¹ The children have the same kind of clothes as the adults, but on them they look like clothes to play in. And perhaps this points to an explanation of the survival of the modern Norwegian dugnad: At the dugnad "playing man" (*Homo ludens*) is allowed to try out all kinds of capacities in a playful way. At some dugnads the adults are even allowed to use small – but real – mechanical diggers!

The possible contributions of a dugnad perspective to the global struggle for sustainable development seem significant. The dugnad perspective in fact has many similarities with universally known instances of solidarity among subalterns. Because they don't have any privileges to lose, the subalterns will always benefit if they are able to pool their resources. In many cultures the privileged try to stop subalterns from pooling resources and making common efforts to improve their situations. "Divide and rule" is an effective way to do this, and in many capitalist societies the combination of weak workers unions and differentiated and concealed wage systems serve this purpose. Strong unions, which promote open and fair wage systems, are the workers' way to stop capital from dividing and ruling. Norwegian unions are strong, but the "dividing and ruling" logic has been strengthened through twenty years of deregulations. A competitive culture is pushing the dugnad culture aside.⁴² The deregulations started with the Conservative government in the mid-1980s. What

³⁹ Because of the egalitarian values of Norwegian dugnad culture the "old" Norwegian over class has always consumed very inconspicuously. No wonder Thorstein Veblen had Norwegian roots! (Veblen 1992). Veblen's despise for conspicuous consumption is still shared by many Norwegians. On the other hand some members of a "new" Norwegian over class tend to consume very conspicuously. The majority of Norwegians regards the "culture of greed" that this conspicuous consumption symbolizes as a problem to Norwegian society.

⁴⁰ Audun Ruud (2002) provides a national view on this integration of business actors and perspectives in the sustainability efforts, while the "Hindrances Report" from the "Sustainable Local Communities" project (Aall et al. 1999) tells the story from a local perspective.

⁴¹ Take a look at the picture at http://odin.dep.no/archiv/udvedlegg/01/05/nsbu_047.pdf

⁴² This pushing aside of the cooperative dugnad culture is in line with the "Tit for Tat" reaction function described by Jon Elster: "In repeated interactions, each person must choose a *reaction mechanism* that tells him what to do in any given interaction as a function of what he and others did in previous interactions. A particularly simple reaction function, 'Tit for Tat,' tells people to begin by cooperating in the first round and then to cooperate in any later round if and only if all others cooperated in the previous round. If all adopt this principle, all will cooperate in each interaction. Under certain conditions, universal adoption of Tit for Tat is an equilibrium. If others adopt it, nobody can do better than adopt it himself. Universal adoption of the principle 'Never cooperate' is also an equilibrium, but an inferior one" (Elster 1995:132). When competitive individualism is encouraged, the cooperative (and superior) "Tit for Tat" equilibrium of the dugnad culture is thus destroyed. Elster also writes, "An all-cooperative economy could be superior, perhaps by a great deal, to an all-capitalist one, even if isolated cooperatives do worse than capitalist firms in a capitalist environment" (Elster 1995:170). There would however be some transition costs involved in a change towards an all-cooperative economy, and Elster further writes, "The only thing that could motivate people to suffer the transition costs would be perceiving the reform to be a matter of basic justice, not economic efficiency" (ibid.). Basic justice

is more confusing to the Norwegian public is that Labour governments continued the deregulations.

The legitimizing of blue-green “ecological modernization” thus seems to happen at the cost of the dugnad culture. This is a big loss to many Norwegians, who are now trying to understand why society seems to fall apart around them.⁴³ Some blame “the foreigners”. And of course any new “foreigner” will mean one more citizen who is not brought up in a Norwegian dugnad culture. But s/he might have been brought up in a dugnad culture somewhere else in the world. And even if s/he does not have such a background, “the foreigner” might learn about the rights, obligations and benefits of a dugnad culture and then become part of it. But no one seems to learn anyone about the national dugnad culture these days. There is a lack of consciousness of the whole logic of the national dugnad economy which has been built by “national strategists” since 1814 (Slagstad 1998). The “dugnad capital”, as a cultural capital, is not being supported by a protection of the core of the dugnad economy: the fair sharing of the pie. On the other hand, the accumulated “dugnad capital” and “dugnad ethic” is still being used as a reservoir for a national “dugnad spirit”. As part of Norway’s “heroic” past the national dugnad culture is also revived and celebrated once a year – at 17 May. Norway’s Constitutional Day 17 May is one big national dugnad. Almost everybody works for free to create celebrations and people’s parades in every community. And in Oslo all the children gather for an enormous children’s parade to the Royal Castle to greet the national dugnad leaders – the Royal Family.

But these celebrations are just creating some “breathing space” within an increasingly competitive and brutal national economy. The celebrations might help to preserve the dugnad values, but they don’t help in protecting workers who lose their jobs while shareholders increase their profits. In the national Norwegian dugnad economy of the past businesses that had a good economic performance could not fire workers just to increase profits.

This might seem like a sad picture: A country had it all – a national dugnad economy which promoted equality, peaceful cooperation and prosperity – and then gave it away in a hope that this could help others.⁴⁴ In the end everybody seems to be worse off. Norway’s

was just what the creation of the Norwegian welfare state was all about. At a Norwegian National Agenda 21 conference in April 2003, the Danish-Norwegian poverty researcher Else Øyen asked why Norwegian authorities are not promoting their welfare state model internationally. After all, she said, the Scandinavian welfare state is the only known institution that has been able to eradicate poverty, and Norway was a very poor country when the creation of the welfare state started (Øyen 2003). Here it is important to remember that the welfare state was not built on the oil fortune. The welfare state was fully developed in the 1960s, before Norwegians knew anything about North Sea oil.

⁴³ In an article about “Managers and consultants as manipulators” Norwegian historian, member of the Conservative Party and former leader of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee Francis Sejersted writes, “A leader of course have to lead, he has to use power. [...] Power alone is not enough. It must be balanced by its counterpart – trust, which in itself is an art because use of force destroys trust. [...] Moral trust [...] reminds of traditional authority relations where both sanctions and arguments were out of the question. The leader was just accepted. It is impossible to give any strategic advice as to how to build this kind of trust. Some things in life can only be achieved by not struggling for them” (Sejersted 1995:228, my translation). In a footnote he adds, with reference to the Norwegian philosopher Gunnar Skirbekk, “Or perhaps Skirbekk gives us a suggestion about how to build this kind of trust by acting as ‘first among equals’.” The trust-building business leaders described by Sejersted and Skirbekk seem to act as typical dugnad leaders: The employees (the dugnad participants) trust that the leader knows what he is doing and will look after the common good. The leader trusts that the participants do their best. It’s as simple as that – in a dugnad culture. In Norway there are still business leaders who run their business as a dugnad and many of these businesses are successful. Increasing numbers of female business leaders seem to promote a kind of revival of the dugnad culture. Many male leaders are also looking for ways to establish a business culture built on trust and common values, but they seem to be less inclined to understand that job security and fair sharing of the surplus must be part of such trust building.

⁴⁴ It might seem “far out” to suggest that the deregulation and internationalization of Norwegian economy has been a strategy for promoting sustainable development globally. When one sees the disastrous consequences to

national dugnad economy is lost, and in 100 years no one will probably believe that it ever existed. But there are still reasons to believe in a revival of the national dugnad spirit. This relates both to the feeling of loss in the Norwegian people and the survival of the dugnad culture in Norwegian politics.

Norwegian politicians as dugnad leaders

In this globalized world Norwegians have started to believe that Norwegian politicians are like all other politicians – they want to serve the interest of their own interest groups (and themselves!) even if this happens at the cost of the common good. But if one takes a closer look at Norwegian politics this picture doesn't really fit.

“Hello in the week” is the most famous Norwegian case of political satire. It's a radio programme, which claims to be “the second most funny programme in the Cultural Channel”. Implicitly, the funniest programme is the news, where politicians are explaining their beliefs and actions. In the radio parodies Norwegian politicians are often portrayed as children: Children fighting at the playground, children who don't want to play with each other any more – and then do want to play again, and so on. The parodies are usually extremely funny, but at the same time I get this feeling of guilt while laughing. I didn't use to get this feeling, but after interviewing 28 Norwegian “grassroots politicians” I have gained a new respect for Norwegian politicians. My interviewees differ along most dimensions, but they have two things in common: They are reasonably resource conscious and extremely socially responsible. I feel that I have discovered *Homo politicus norvegicus* – the ideal typical dugnad leader.⁴⁵

Dugnads have similarities with children's play. Hard working Norwegian politicians thus run the risk of being viewed as children in a sandpit – arguing about the best solutions for the building of roads, houses, airports and tunnels. I think they are able to live with that. Much more difficult are situations where their work is measured with the standards used to control politicians in other countries. Part of what makes a dugnad so effective is the pooling of resources. Someone knows someone who has a mechanical digger, which might be borrowed almost for free on a Saturday. Should the money this someone gets be given up for taxation? No one would insist on that. In Norwegian politics “horse trading” is used as a tool to reach the best possible compromises. Different politicians of course protect the interests of their own interest groups, but in the final negotiations they might give up some of what they might in fact have achieved if playing tough. Everybody knows that the best result for everybody is a result that everybody “can live with”. As representatives of different interest groups the politicians know approximately what these groups “can live with” – and they have the legitimacy to tell these groups that the achieved solution was the best possible result everything taken into consideration. A political compromise thus secures societal peace and cooperation.

the cement of Norwegian society, it's hard to believe that anyone would take such a risk for the global common good. But before dismissing the hypothesis that this is a planned sustainability effort, one should consider the fact that the main architect of this process was Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norwegian Prime Minister 1986-89 and 1990-96).

⁴⁵ It's a kind of irony in this late discovery of the culture I grew up in. More than thirty years ago I was brought to dugnads by one of the more successful dugnad leaders in Norwegian history – my own father (Arne Haugestad). He was the leader of the popular movement against Norwegian membership in the European Common Market. The popular movement won the referendum in 1972 – as they did in 1994 (my father then played a less active role). My own most important memory from the 1972 campaign is this: I sat in our car outside a shop and looked at a poster from the “Yes movement”. The poster said “Yes to cooperation!”. This confused me. Didn't “we” (the “No movement”) want to cooperate? In 1994 I had the following slogan in my home: “Yes to cooperation – with Europe and the rest of the world”.

The interest groups may complain a bit about some of the “horse trading” taking place – but in the end they know that it’s in their own interest. But the voters often don’t get this dugnad picture. Because of the need to win votes the politicians try to make the differences between the political parties seem bigger than they are. This creates some confusion – and also some distrust in politicians. It’s as though Norwegian politicians need a bigger task so that they can show the voters how responsible and cooperative they really are. Global sustainable development might be this common task that Norwegian politicians need. In such a task they would be able to utilize their capabilities for the common good. And they might – and probably should – join the project without giving up the differences between the parties.

In the “rainbow political” project of sustainable development⁴⁶ it is important that all voices are being heard. Thus the Norwegian tradition for (almost) “one party to each different voice” seems to be a good role model. Each party is important because even the most marginal of voices might grow to popular distrust and protest if the voice is silenced. To avoid “the return of the repressed” even the most outrageous points of view must be taken seriously in the political dialogue. Then those holding those views will probably after a while get rid of the views on their own. This happened in several of my interviews with nationalists. I took their points of view seriously and tried to understand the “places” from where these views felt appropriate. In a way I went together with the informants to those places, but I also invited them to the “global house” that I am trying to sketch. In this way I learned about their reasons for not wanting to live in such a global house – and some of them even changed their mind after learning about the potentials in “global resource sharing”.

The potentials in “global resource sharing” relates to the creation of a global dugnad economy. Given that a dugnad economy cannot survive within a competitive economy, one might say that the only way Norwegians can protect and promote a national dugnad economy is by striving towards a universal dugnad economy. *Our Common Future* states,

The Earth is one but the world is not. We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others. Some consume the Earth’s resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Others, many more in number, consume far too little and live with the prospects of hunger, squalor, disease, and early death. (WCED 1987:27)

An earth citizen perspective is one potential way to bridge the unsustainable gap between “one earth” and “many worlds”. The global ethic following from the “three coloured” concept of sustainable development seems to be close to an “earth citizen ethic” or a “global dugnad ethic”. The chances for a change towards a global dugnad ethic to take place might seem microscopic. Strong actors benefit from the competitive world economy. But the same actors depend on the goodwill and trust of voters and consumers. As earth citizens we might choose to support those businesses and politicians who act according to a global dugnad ethic. We have the right to information on businesses’ social and environmental performance. If we don’t like what we find out – or if information is concealed – we can choose other businesses and politicians, who both in words and actions promote environmental sustainability and workers’ rights to a fair share of the societal pie.

It is not difficult to find support for the interpretation of Norwegian politicians as global dugnad leaders. The Norwegian White Paper from 1996-97 on sustainable development is called “Dugnad for the future” (MoE 1996-97). And when the Minister of the

⁴⁶ It’s been claimed that Norway is not a particularly “green” state (Dryzek et al. 2003). I will instead suggest that Norway performs as a “rainbow political” actor (cf. Braidotti et al. 1994:177). In fact Andrew Dobson also encourages such broadening of the colour spectrum as a strategy for “green politics” in his study *Green Political Thoughts* (Dobson 2000).

Environment in 1998, Guro Fjellanger,⁴⁷ gathered 50 people from 28 countries for a workshop on sustainable consumption, she was obviously able to create a “dugnad spirit”. One of the chapters in the workshop report is titled “Let’s do it!” and optimism on the possibilities to do this common task runs through the whole report (Robins & Roberts 1998). At the earlier mentioned front page picture of the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* (MoFA 2002) there are rays from the sun, but these rays mix with rays coming from Norway. As a Norwegian socialized to be modest on behalf of my group I first found these rays coming from Norway embarrassing, but after a while I took the point: It’s the dugnad spirit which shine all over the globe.

It is an open question for how long it is possible to sustain dugnad values without sustaining the “societal resource base” of the dugnad economy: the fair sharing of the pie. This question should be kept in mind when we now turn our attention towards how Norwegian authorities evoke dugnad values in their efforts to achieve sustainable consumption patterns in Norway.

A Norwegian dugnad for sustainable consumption?

At the dugnad everyone is equal. Between households inequality is socially accepted. In this respect a dugnad culture is significantly different from a gift culture.⁴⁸ The difference between the dugnad logic and the household logic means that there are different norms for acceptable inequality for the dugnad and the household respectively. A dugnad for sustainable consumption then necessarily evokes a norm conflict. According to a dugnad norm for globally responsible consumption, the household should refrain from using its purchasing power at the expense of the environment and other people’s welfare. But according to a narrow household norm for responsible consumption the household should try to get as much comfort, experiences, goods and services as possible out of its purchasing power.

A possible way to solve the norm conflict between a global dugnad norm and the narrow household norm is a shift in focus from dugnad to “identity projects”, or perhaps rather a shift from an appeal to “dugnad obligations” towards a revival of the “dugnad spirit”. A “dugnad spirit” is much more suited for sustainable consumption efforts than “dugnad obligations”. In the household sphere individuals should feel free from external obligations.⁴⁹ But every household consists of earth citizens who might *like* to feel that they take part in a global dugnad for sustainable development. This life quality approach to the whole sustainability project is in line with the very enthusiastic and optimistic report from the earlier mentioned international workshop on sustainable consumption:

If we want to improve consumption, we should feel good about it, pay attention to it, do it well, have fun – in other words, celebrate consumption. (Robins & Roberts 1998:21)

The workshop provided a useful explanation of sustainable consumption:

Sustainable consumption explained

- Making *goods and services* serve sustainable development: economic efficiency, social justice and environmental improvement
- Influencing the *choices* made by individuals, corporations and public authorities

⁴⁷ Fjellanger represents the social liberal party, “Venstre”, which is Norway’s oldest political party.

⁴⁸ The “gift mechanism” is more radical in creating societal equality, but this at the same time takes away incentives to work harder than others. The “dugnad mechanism” might on the other hand exist side by side with competitive individualism. But a dugnad culture positively sanctions *cooperative individualism*.

⁴⁹ Consumer sovereignty is the core of liberal democracies (cf. Oksanen 2001).

- Using the *demand side* to lever life cycle social, economic and environmental benefits
 - Addressing the *underlying patterns* of demand: market structures, values, knowledge, equity, marketing, prices, regulation, infrastructure
- (Robins & Roberts 1998:16)

Norwegian authorities' efforts to promote sustainable consumption focus thoroughly on all these aspects (MoCFA 1998-99). The first effort that was directly linked to the Brundtland Report and its definition of sustainable development was the Norwegian Campaign for Environment and Development (NCED).

Before 1987 several Norwegian NGOs had focused on resource conscious consumption. The primary goal of Norwegian consumer policy however was – and still is – to strengthen the role of the consumer in the market. Before 1987 the use of consumer policies to promote societal goals was politically unacceptable, and as late as in 2000 blue political parties still protested against such an approach.⁵⁰ With the launching of NCED Norwegian authorities started a motivational process for sustainable (production and) consumption, which ends with the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* in 2002.⁵¹ NCED was launched April 1987, and was closed down by the end of 1992. Berit Aasen made an evaluation of the campaign:⁵²

The campaign had a small, but efficient secretariat of four people, 106 member organizations, including political parties, almost all developmental and environmental NGOs as well as other large NGOs, and associations like the confederations of trade unions and industry and businesses. It was administratively affiliated to the UN Association of Norway, it was governed by a campaign committee (kampanjeutvalg) with representatives from the member organizations.

The background for starting the campaign was the launching of the report from the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED), where the Norwegian Labour Party leader Gro Harlem Brundtland was the Chairman. The basic idea was there to initiate a broad based information campaign related to the release of the WCED report, and that NGOs working with environmental and developmental issues should be involved. A campaign leader, Elin Enge, was recruited in 1986 and plans were prepared.

NCED was therefore one of the very first national networking organizations for information and mobilization on environment and development. Many networking organizations were to come, as well as regional and international networks.

The objective of the campaign, as formulated by the Ministry of Development and Cooperation when the campaign was started up, was threefold;

- to inform about environment and development
- to make people understand the relationship between environment and development
- to mobilize and make people participate, in environment and development related actions

On the basis of these objectives, NCED mainly performed three tasks during its six years of existence:

- information, service centre
- coordinator and initiator
- funding agent, disbursement of funds for joint NGO projects

In its work NCED made extensive use of three work methods:

- it provided a meeting place
- it acted as an incubator for new initiatives

⁵⁰ This happened during the parliamentary debates on White Paper 40 on consumer policy (MoCFA 1998-99).

⁵¹ Norwegian authorities immediately after the Rio Conference in 1992 defined sustainable production and consumption as “our part of the job”, and this attitude also entrenched the information from NCED 1987-1992.

⁵² As president of the board of FIOH I represented FIOH in the campaign committee of NCED 1990-92. This is one reason why I quote the official evaluation instead of doing my own analysis.

- it engaged in international networking

[...]

One of the new work methods that NCED was engaged in was an extensive *networking internationally*. An active presence at international meetings, by NCED's head Elin Enge, in the international "networking leadership", and an emphasis on maintaining and strengthening international networks has been a valuable new addition to the traditional operation of NGOs, which usually have an international network limited to their own special areas of interest and operation. (Aasen 1994:iv-v)

The "Environmental Home Guard" (EHG) was one of the new initiatives for which NCED acted as an incubator (Aasen 1994:12). EHG was from the beginning in 1991 "an umbrella organization to mobilize existing NGOs around themes dealing with sustainable production and consumption among families and local communities" (Lafferty & Nordskog 2002:183). This was a way of using the dugnad culture so familiar to the existing NGOs to promote the sustainability agenda. EHG explicitly linked the work to the dugnad from the very start.⁵³ The logo read: "Environmental Home Guards – The Dugnad of the 1990s". Of course this logo had to be changed by the turn of the century. In 2003 EHG also changed its name – to "Green Everyday" (GE). But even if GE seems to stress the dugnad perspective slightly less than EHG used to do, the dugnad rhetoric is still used:

Green Everyday is a network of individuals, groups and organizations. Together we carry out a national environmental dugnad. By choosing more environmentally friendly solutions in our own everyday, we contribute to a more sustainable development in Norway and internationally. [...]

You can get advice on how you can contribute to the solution of environmental problems, step by step. [...] Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something.⁵⁴

NCED and EHG/GE have probably contributed significantly to addressing underlying value patterns and to the creation of a culture of resource consciousness.⁵⁵ A parliamentary "Value Commission" (1998-2001) was also important in promoting value debates, but the commission did not relate these debates specifically to sustainable consumption. The commission rather questioned materialism and individualism more generally and made appeals to "other values in life" such as spending time together and taking care of each other. "07-06-05 – time for change" is a state founded initiative (founded in 2000) to "take back the time" as Norwegians approach the country's 100 anniversary as independent state 7 June 2005. The initiative explicitly links this "taking back of the time" to freeing oneself from the pressure to work and consume more and more. It also makes appeals to environmental concerns.

⁵³ EHG/GE is primarily state financed. I also represented FIOH in the establishing of EHG. I am very grateful to Dag Endal (former leader of EHG) and Kristen Ulstein (present leader of GE and former information officer in EHG) for revealing to me the potentials in consciously acting out the "dugnad spirit".

⁵⁴ From www.gronnhverdag.no/om.php (my translation). The focus on the environment (not global distributive concerns) reflects a conscious choice not to be too "controversial". The Green Everyday logo still hints to global distribution: it's a green footprint.

⁵⁵ A national survey shows that willingness to consume environmentally responsible is high and stable despite an apparent decrease in environmental concern among Norwegians (Hellevik 2002). Green Everyday has approximately 50,000 individual members, but most of GE's educational and motivational work is done through 17 big member organizations, which together cover the whole Norwegian population. The Church of Norway, the Norwegian Confederation of Sports and the Norwegian Scout associations are among the members of GE and promote the GE message through their own channels. GE also focuses on educating and motivating producers and retailers.

Norwegian authorities have put much money and effort into identifying obstacles and opportunities for sustainable consumption. The Research Council of Norway run a research programme on sustainable production and consumption from 1997 to 2001 which financed 21 projects on issues such as industrial ecology, “green household budgets”, ecological food, consumer preferences, product life time, eco-labelling, housing-related consumption, transport, consequence clarification, attitudes to climate policy, eco-effective businesses and life cycle analysis.⁵⁶ A pilot project on ”Sustainable Local Communities” was explicitly designed to identify obstacles, and the ”Hindrances Report” from the project is a path-breaking work on “hindrances evaluation” (Aall et al. 1999). Other significant governmental contributions to promoting sustainable (production and) consumption are:

- Official support for the establishment of the Programme for Research and Documentation for a Sustainable Society (ProSus) within the Research Council of Norway [...]
- A study commissioned by SFT in 1995 on “Critical Resources for Sustainable Production and Consumption”, the results of which had an impact on the deliberations of the so-called “Green Tax Commission” [...]
- Establishment of a Centre for ”green Livelihoods”, which evolved into the ”GRIP Foundation for Sustainable Production and Consumption”, an innovation and documentation centre directed mainly towards business [...]
- A programme for “Green Government” – a comprehensive attempt to move governmental bodies in the direction of more sustainable consumption. (Lafferty & Nordskog 2002:182-183)

Despite all these efforts there are few signs of “decoupling” of economic growth from resource use in Norway.⁵⁷ This seems to be a sad message to the world. After 15 years of immense motivational efforts to promote sustainable consumption, Norwegian resource use per capita is going up, not down (Bugge 2002). The patterns that are uncovered in this paper make the picture less sad and give some reasons to hope for – perhaps even expect – “decoupling” in the near future, during the next phase in the work for sustainable consumption in Norway.

The first phase in the work for sustainable consumption was a phase of mobilization of all parts of society to identify with the efforts to create a more “resource-friendly” Norway. The main focus in this phase has been on waste and recycling, and there has been widespread use of national media and different incitements to create a culture of resource consciousness. Another effort with clear links to sustainable development is the CO₂ tax, which is among the highest in the world. After heavy protests against increased fuel prices in the mid 1990s it seems however like Norwegian authorities have postponed a clear public linking of the CO₂ tax to sustainability efforts until this tax can be seen as part of an international common effort. My own interview material indicates that this has been a wise strategy.

My interviews with Norwegians from the whole range of political parties also indicate that the creation of a culture of resource consciousness is now close to a successful end. Different groups and political parties might have quite different interpretations of what resource-friendliness is all about, but these interpretations do not seem to be conflicting.⁵⁸ At least they will not be conflicting after 2008 – when the Kyoto mechanisms will allow Norway

⁵⁶ Four ministries participated in funding the research programme: the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture.

⁵⁷ On “decoupling”, see Azar et al. 2002.

⁵⁸ On the other hand several actors would protest against this implicit reductionist definition of sustainable development as resource-efficiency and resource sharing. Yet I stick to this definition because of its potentials for “overlapping consensus” (cf. Rawls 2001).

to be a “climate responsible” global actor. But some important groups of actors are still very critical to how Norwegian authorities handle the sustainability efforts. These are people who refuse to reduce “nature” to “resources” (a “radically green” approach), people who refuse to accept the market mechanism as a tool for change (a “radically red” approach) and people who refuse to accept the concept of “eco-efficient and dematerialized growth” (a “radically techno-sceptic” approach). All these groups count quite significant numbers of Norwegians.⁵⁹ Creating spaces for the building of consensus with these “extremes” is probably one of the most important tasks that is now facing Norwegian authorities. My own interview material indicates that potentials for consensus exist, but the release of such potentials depends on dialogue and building of trust.

Three pages in the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* might be read as summing up the movement from the first to the second phase of sustainable (production and) consumption. A headline says, “We must all do our share” (MoFA 2002:43). Then those who must do their share get separate descriptions of their tasks: national authorities with “an overall responsibility”; county and municipal authorities⁶⁰ with “particular responsibility for many functions that directly affect their inhabitants”, the Sami parliament with “the important task to ensure that indigenous peoples are actively and systematically involved”; business and industry that will be “subject to quotas under a domestic emissions trading system” from 2005; the voluntary sector with “the diversity and varied backgrounds of non-governmental organizations”; and finally “each and every one of us” who as consumers “all play a part in influencing the priorities set by business and industry and the quality of goods and services offered” (MoFA 2002:43-45). Thus the whole society is supposed to be mobilized – but what is the common goal of the next phase? What indicators will show that the society is moving in the right direction? The answer to these questions is implicit in a separate box in the strategy.

“Households and ecological footprints” is the headline in the box which signals the start of a new phase in the Norwegian efforts to promote sustainable (production and) consumption. I quote all the relevant text in the box because it shows how Norwegian authorities manage to get the message about a global dugnad for resource sharing through without moralizing:

Households and ecological footprints

A person’s or a population’s “ecological footprint” is a measure of the area of productive land and aquatic ecosystems needed to produce the resources used by the individual or group. On a global basis, the average area available per person is calculated to be 1.9 ha. Calculations show that the average ecological footprint of a North American is 12.3 ha, and the

⁵⁹ Based on Norwegian statistics I will estimate that each group consists of approximately five per cent of the population – with some overlap between the groups so that around ten per cent of the population would probably regard the revised and egalitarian “ecological modernization” approach presented in this paper with suspicion and perhaps view it as “dangerously naïve”. I would rather call myself “consciously naïve” in my search for a common ground for global sustainable development, and I am especially grateful to Elisabeth Gulbrandsen for always encouraging me to stay on this path.

⁶⁰ County and municipal authorities have played a significant role in promoting the sustainability agenda in Norway. In a dugnad perspective it makes sense that state authorities in the recent years have withdrawn financial support to local initiatives (Bjørnes & Nordland 2002:45) while still financing initiatives such as the Ideas Bank (www.idebanken.no) and the national Internet resource on Local Agenda 21 (www.agenda21.no) (both websites also have English versions). After 15 years of national financial support to environmental and Local Agenda 21 activities (especially the Environment in the Municipalities reform from 1991 to 1997, see Bjørnes & Norland 2002:44) the national authorities now seem to want local authorities to show a willingness to give priority to these questions without state incitements. Lots of local actors also show such willingness.

corresponding figures for a Norwegian and Ghanaian are 6.14 ha and 1.1 ha respectively. As the world population grows, the area available per person is dropping.

The Western Norwegian Research Institute and ProSus [...] were commissioned by the City of Oslo to calculate the ecological footprint for the inhabitants in Oslo. Their calculations show that food consumption alone accounts for 50 per cent of the ecological footprint in Oslo, which is about 4 per cent above the national average. Passenger transport and homes account for 22 and 16 per cent, respectively, of the total.

Air travel accounts for 14 per cent of the ecological footprint of Oslo's inhabitants. This is considerably higher than the national average. Much of this is foreign travel. The next largest component of transport is the use of private cars, which are now used almost as much for leisure travel as for work-related travel.

The proportion of the ecological footprint related to homes is determined largely by their size, and is related to energy use and the consumption of materials. Norwegian homes are on average about 25 per cent larger than in other industrialized countries.

Steps to reduce the ecological footprints of Norwegians will therefore be most effective if they target food, car use and air transport, and homes. If such measures are to work, the authorities and private households must cooperate. Some of the measures proposed in the report are as follows:

Public authorities

- Plan for proximity between housing and shops
- Encourage the production and sale of ecologically-produced food
- Improve public transport
- Restrict car use
- Plan for smaller homes
- Plan for the use of district heating and biofuel

Households

- Use the local shop
- Buy organic food and other food with a small ecological footprint
- Try to manage without a car, or at least drive less
- Be prepared to buy a smaller home
- Choose district heating and biofuel for space heating

(MoFA 2002:45)

Who is the implicit "norm source"⁶¹ of this text? The reader is! The text doesn't tell you what to do. It just tells you what you *might* do if you think the Norwegian ecological footprint is too big. It's up to the reader to decide whether the differences in footprints are fair and whether s/he wants to act upon the information. If s/he chooses to act, s/he gets some ideas about what to do from the text. Interestingly, the text does not suggest any actions related to air transport.

Oluf Langhelle in his report *Sustainable Production and Consumption – from Conceptions of Sustainable Development to Household Strategies for Sustainable Consumption* (2001) describes how "green consumers" of different kinds might be motivated to start "voluntary internalization" of the costs related to CO₂ emissions. He also describes how air transport is a privilege that rich consumers only very reluctantly will give up, even if they have a high level of environmental consciousness. An offer to pay a voluntary CO₂ tax on international air transport might thus be regarded as an unqualified blessing by these rich, green consumers. And if the tax revenue is channelled to poverty eradication and sustainable energy to the poor one will at the same time achieve a direct linking of three overriding global challenges: internalization of resource costs associated with air transport; the transfer of purchasing power from "overconsumers" to "underconsumers"; and development of

⁶¹ On the concept of norm sources, see Therborn 2002.

sustainable energy sources in poor countries. Those who cannot afford to pay such a tax can just refrain from it. Thus there are no reasons to organize protests against it. And in accordance with the dugnad spirit – those who have the most resources contribute the most – one can expect people to pay more than they would have done if the tax were obligatory.

Norwegian potentials to evoke a dugnad spirit for globally responsible consumption

When it comes to actually *consuming* more resource friendly (and not only express a general environmental awareness) the Norwegian situation is marked by a kind of ambivalence. This ambivalence seems to correspond to the earlier mentioned norm conflict between a global dugnad norm and a narrow household norm. Lots of Norwegians are mobilized to wanting to participate in the efforts to achieve a more resource-friendly/sustainable⁶² consumption pattern. But at the same time one doesn't want to sacrifice one's own or the family's welfare if it's not actually part of a joint dugnad where one's own "sacrifices" make sense. This situation might be interpreted as collective powerlessness: Lots of people want to contribute, but it seems meaningless to sacrifice one's own welfare if no one else does it. There seems to be a lack of a sense of a common "narrative" and plan of action – or a trustworthy dugnad leader – which might transform all the mobilized willingness to consume more responsible into actual changes in resource use. Only actual changes in resource use can bring about the necessary "decoupling" of economic growth from resource use.

People who would in fact like to start to consume more responsible as soon as possible, even if others are not doing anything, are faced with another set of obstacles. These are related to the norms for being a "successful" consumer. In today's increasingly competitive national culture the perception of successful consumption is primarily related to the narrow household norm. Thus, the more comfort, welfare and exotic experiences (often involving air transport) you can offer yourself and your family, the more successful you are. Many Norwegians, who do not want success to be about material possessions but about living a rich and meaningful life, dispute this norm. But the narrow material welfare norm still rules. And it seems to be strengthened rather than weakened. This strengthening of the material welfare norm for successful consumption is probably related to the deregulation of Norwegian economy.

In the 1960s most houses that were built in Norway were of approximately the same size. Now there are signs of "competitive house building". By building a bigger house than your neighbour you show your success to everybody. Such competitive consumption is however still regarded with lots of suspicion by many Norwegians.

The increase in living space might also be given an explanation which is not related to competitiveness and conspicuous consumption. Norway is a cold country. To live a reasonably comfortable life during winter you need some living space. And the average Norwegian has more children than most other Europeans. If all family members want a shower before leaving the house in the morning you might feel that you need at least two bathrooms. This picture is more in line with what Erling Holden found when interviewing

⁶² The concept "sustainable consumption" (in Norwegian: "bærekraftig forbruk") is not much used in the Norwegian work to promote sustainable consumption. This is a situation common to most countries: "Unfortunately, the concept of sustainable consumption has had little resonance so far outside the international policy community" (Robins & Roberts 1998:28). The most used concepts in Norwegian information to consumers is "green consumption" ("grønt forbruk") and "environmentally-conscious consumption" ("miljøbevisst forbruk"). Due to a strong environmental movement with which a significant portion of Norwegians don't identify it might seem as a wise governmental strategy to broaden the use of concepts and include concepts such as "sustainable consumption", "resource-conscious consumption" and "globally responsible consumption" in information to consumers.

Norwegians about household consumption (Holden 2002). He didn't meet openly competitive consumers, but rather consumers who when asked to reflect about their situation (Holden 2002:229) seemed to have problems with coming to grips with how they had ended up with a big house, lots of superfluous material possessions, a pressed private economy and lack of time to enjoy life together. Holden writes,

Given that people live where they live, the opportunities some people have for switching over to more environment-friendly housing-related consumption are out of reach. Things just have to be like they are for their everyday lives to function. Seen this way, there are grounds to claim that the most important decision about engaging in the environment-friendly actions is taken when one acquires a dwelling. Once chosen, one is caught up in material structures. (Holden 2002:xxiii)

Holden also suggest changes which might take place if people internalize the need for all earth citizens to consume more responsible:

The social-material field of action will change as a consequence of this. In such a situation it would no longer be so attractive to live in a large detached house in a sparsely populated area with a long way to go to reach public and private transport services. It would be easier to uphold the welfare of inhabitants living in relatively small concentrated towns and built-up areas. (Holden 2002:xxvi)

The conditions for such changes to take place are complex. If parents want to become responsible earth citizens, this choice has consequences for their children. Parents who sent their children out in the Norwegian dugnad culture of the 1960s, usually felt confident that their children would be taken care of and be welcomed into society. If on the other hand you have to send your children out in a competitive culture, you feel that you owe them to make them as well prepared for the competition as possible. To many parents such acts of care towards their children includes buying a house slightly bigger than what they can really afford and buying the same clothes, computers, games and sports equipment that "all the other kids" get from their parents. It might also include getting their children into private schools. The competitive culture is thus fuelled by parental love for their children. And it is very difficult for individual parents to break out of this vicious circle.⁶³

Compared to the powerlessness experienced by American participants in an increasingly cynical and competitive consumption culture, as described by, among others, Richard Stivers (1997) and Juliet Schor (2000), Norwegians however are less powerless. They know an alternative. Those parents who have teenagers today still remember the feeling of security in the dugnad culture. They know that the fight for such a culture is worth fighting. They just need someone who tells them how to fight, and who take the responsibility to redefine the "successful consumer" and serve as a role model for "responsible cosmopolitanism". I have mentioned that the present Norwegian Minister of the Environment seems to have the capabilities to become a global dugnad leader. He is also in the right age to become a leader and role model in the fight for the survival of the Norwegian dugnad culture. A dugnad for sustainable development by definition includes environmental limits to growth, economic limits to inefficiency and social limits to inequality. The traditional Norwegian dugnad ethic and dugnad spirit thus seem to be optimal answers to the global sustainability challenges.

⁶³ At this point I find the clearest generational effect in my interview material. Those who are parents within a competitive culture, still promote egalitarian dugnad norms, but they tend to find it difficult to impose such norms on their children. Those who brought up their children in a dugnad culture, tend to insist that dugnad norms should be imposed on the children – for the common good.

In their efforts to promote sustainable consumption Norwegian authorities have tried to evoke both the national and the global dugnad spirit. These efforts have resulted in significant learning on how to balance household concerns and a dugnad spirit. The dugnad culture cannot thrive if there are unresolved controversies about the goals, paths and tools of the dugnad. So when bumping into controversies the efforts have been reconsidered and the strategies have been changed. This testing out of possible consensus has had international meetings and workshops as a test ground.⁶⁴ It was thus international controversy which made Norwegian authorities decide *not* to make any references to a global “environmental space” to be shared between all earth citizens in the big pilot project on sustainable communities.⁶⁵ This decision was in line with the earlier mentioned decision to step back on the “national targets” strategy in the climate negotiations. Even if Norwegian consumers could be motivated by an “earth citizen ethic” this would probably not be a path for many other countries to follow.⁶⁶ Instead the project focus on strictly individual possible benefits from “green consumption”, such as a healthy environment, quality of life, saving some money, experiencing nature, getting to know other people, and doing something meaningful together.

The narrow household perspective of “green consumption” was however not experienced as very meaningful and motivating to the families who were taking part in the “Green Families” project within the “Sustainable Local Communities” project. The sociologist Anne Bregnballe made a qualitative study of the project and some of the families’ reactions to the project (Bregnballe 2000). She found that the families missed a global perspective. They wanted to take part in dialogues on how to become globally responsible consumers and they had expected to get opportunities to do something together with the other families to change infrastructural obstacles to “responsible wellbeing”. Instead the project treated them as self-interested actors who could only be motivated by strictly individual benefits. In fact the benefits the families had hoped for were also individual. They wanted to feel less guilty about their own consumption privileges. They wanted to experience responsible wellbeing. This is an important finding which shows potentials for bridging the apparent gap between on the one hand the narrow self-interest of the household norm for responsible consumption and on the other hand globally responsible consumption.

Another qualitative study adds significantly to the picture of global responsibility as in Norwegians consumers’ self-interest. American sociologist Kari Marie Norgaard became so puzzled by the lack of political mobilization to protect our common atmosphere in the

⁶⁴ Norway has hosted four international conferences on sustainable (production and) consumption: “The Soria Moria Symposium: Sustainable Consumption and Production” in Oslo in January 1994, the Oslo Ministerial Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption in February 1995, The Rosendal workshop, “Sustainable Consumption and Production: Clarifying the Concepts” (organised by the OECD and hosted by the Environment Ministry of Norway) in July 1995 and finally the workshop on sustainable consumption in Kabelvåg in June 1998 which came out with what might be interpreted as an international dugnad perspective on sustainable consumption (Robins & Robert 1998).

⁶⁵ I know this from personal communication with people involved in the decisions. From 1992 to 1995 the “environmental space” approach was, however, integrated in Norwegian political planning. The cooperative project “Sustainable Economy” (1992-95), in which both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Environment participated, together with NGOs and researchers, used “environmental space” as a framework concept (Hansen et al. 1995). The concept is also referred to in several political documents, i.e. MoE 1996-97:3 and MoCFA 1998-99:23, as indicating a global equity framework for the sustainability challenges.

⁶⁶ “Do-good-ism” as foreign policy has trickled down to the whole population. And deeply rooted international solidarity and Christian charity are feeding into both identity projects and foreign policy (Matlary 2002). The general presence of an “earth citizen ethic” in the Norwegian population is represented and reproduced by annual TV campaigns, learning programmes, the celebration of the UN Day (October 24) in most schools, distant adoptions of poor children, a general awareness of global solidarity among many journalists and a general feeling that we are privileged and should try to help less privileged people to improve their life chances. There are thus reasons to believe that Norwegians have a stronger interest in an “earth citizen ethics” than people of most other nationalities.

otherwise so environmentally conscious Norwegian population that she went to Norway to study the phenomenon. In *Community, Place and Privilege: Double Realities, Denial and Climate Change in Norway* (Norgaard 2003) she reports from conversations with "ordinary people" in a Norwegian community. Through her mapping of different explanations to the fact that people in the community did not mobilize to prevent climate change, Norgaard has contributed significantly to the understanding of obstacles and potentials to creating a dugnad spirit for globally responsible consumption. I will sum up some of her findings (Norgaard 2003) as follows:

Obstacles to political mobilization and a dugnad spirit:

- A silenced knowledge that Norway is making an oil fortune on activities that harm the climate.
- An image of Norway as a small country with no possibilities to change the world on its own.
- A political culture for not bringing to the agenda problems to which one can see no realistic solutions.
- Norm conflicts between environmental concerns (i.e. refraining from driving) and family welfare (driving the kids to activities, taking recreational trips).

Potentials for political mobilization and a dugnad spirit:

- A high level of knowledge on the climate issue. Some informants mixed up climate and ozone issues but there were no signs that the lack of political mobilization was due to lack of knowledge of the seriousness of the climate issue.
- A great deal of concern for both climate change and the poverty crisis. Several informants told about a guilty conscience because of own consumption opportunities in a world with billions living in poverty.
- A generally high level of political participation and thus few signs of "political apathy".

Conclusion

You don't need an international agreement to be able to put one foot after the other when walking.⁶⁷ In the same way someone who has understood the connections between consumption opportunities, resource quotas and the transferring of purchasing power will be able to walk in the right direction if there are possibilities to do so. According to the dugnad principle each are allowed to walk in one's own pace. But it is not accepted that anyone boycotts the common project all together.

This paper's analysis of potentials for globally responsible consumption gives some background to assume that a global resource sharing perspective on sustainable development and sustainable consumption might release win-win possibilities even for rich consumers who would have to give up some consumption privileges, but who would in return get a better "earth citizen conscience". Rich consumers and voters eventually also have self-interest in a stable and peaceful world society. There thus seem to be reasons to assume that a sustainable world society is politically possible. The uncovered potentials are probably quite universal, linked to human needs for basic security and human potentials for care and solidarity, but they still have particularly deep roots in the Norwegian dugnad culture.

The paper suggests that a linking of ecological footprint assessments to possibilities to pay compensation for over-use of resources might encourage identity projects as "responsible

⁶⁷ It was of course an engineer who reminded me of this. Thanks to Halvor Stormoen for his down to earth attitudes and his spreading of the spirit and text of the Earth Charter in Norway.

earth citizens” and result in more resource-friendly consumption choices. International aviation stands out as very suitable for this educational purpose. There are already various existing systems for voluntary aviation tax, but there is no alternative for those who want their voluntary tax to be used exclusively to poverty eradication and sustainable energy to the poor. A trustworthy international image makes Norway and the Nordic countries clear candidates for developing such a service.

A voluntary aviation tax is one of many ways in which globally responsible consumers might become helpers in building a sustainable global society. But for such helping roles to be released in significant numbers of earth citizens there is a need for “heroic” global leaders. Such heroic “global politicians”⁶⁸ might serve as role models and inspirators – as global dugnad leaders – on the way to a common future.

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⁶⁸ Among today’s heroic “global politicians” are Nelson Mandela, Maurice Strong, Kofi Annan, Mikael Gorbachev, Jimmy Carter and Gro Harlem Brundtland. The first heroic global politician was of course Mahatma Gandhi, who reminded us that the world has enough for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed.

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