

# Not Roadmaps but Toolboxes: Analysing Pioneering National Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production

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**Abstract** The profusion of knowledge about the complexity of promoting sustainable consumption has led to calls to address the issue in a cross-cutting manner. This article discusses pioneering national sustainable consumption and production (SCP) programmes as tools for informed decision making. The analysis is based on a theory of three organizing principles for SCP policy: (1) deliberation, (2) efficiency and (3) sufficiency. These organizing principles protect and enact particular values and can be promoted in either a weak or strong manner. A comparison of three SCP programmes from Finland, Sweden, and the UK shows that different programmes emphasize somewhat different principles: programmes in the UK and Finland emphasize the efficiency principle, whereas the Swedish programme places considerable emphasis on promoting sufficiency, as well. Meanwhile, deliberation is well presented in all the programmes, but the countries apply it somewhat differently. On the whole, government commitment to the programmes is limited, and clear targets, timetables, and resources are mentioned only occasionally. Thus, rather than being credible roadmaps towards SCP, the pioneering programmes take the form of mixed toolboxes. The programmes contain many innovative and potentially effective proposals, but in responding to the challenges acknowledged in the programme documents, individual actors must bear heavy responsibilities. From this perspective, the pioneering SCP programmes also provide false reassurance and a means to outsource the promotion of SCP to non-government actors.

**Keywords** Sustainable consumption and production · Policy programmes · Finland · Sweden · United Kingdom

Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production have been widely recognized as one of the root causes of many of the most pressing environmental problems of our time (Southerton et al. 2004, p. 2). However, as frequently noted in the Journal of Consumer Policy (e.g., Haunstrup Christensen et al. 2007; Thøgersen 2005; Thøgersen and Crompton

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2009), simplistic appeals for individuals to move towards sustainability have been proven unsuccessful. Thus, a more holistic and structural approach is needed. National sustainable consumption and production (SCP) programmes aim to provide frameworks for systemic thought across sectors, linking long-term visions to medium-term targets and short-term actions (UNEP 2008, p. 33). This article examines these programmes by analysing three pioneers in the field: the SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden, and the UK. How do these pioneers approach the field? And do they provide credible roadmaps to meet the envisioned challenges?

At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), countries agreed to promote the development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national SCP initiatives (UN 2002, Chapter III). Thus far, more than 30 countries have developed or are developing national SCP programmes (UNEP 2008, p. 3). Different policy approaches related to promoting more sustainable consumption (and production) patterns have been discussed by several prominent academics and practitioners from both sustainable consumption and environmental policy backgrounds (e.g., Clark 2007; Charkiewicz et al. 2001; Cohen and Murphy 2001; Fuchs and Lorek 2005; Hobson 2004; Jackson 2006b; Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000; Spaargaren 1997, 2004; Thøgersen 2005). Moreover, national programmes to promote SCP have been analysed, mapped, and discussed in a number of recent cases (e.g., Berg 2007, 2008; Huvila 2008; Ilomäki and Hildén 2005; Nikula 2008; Seyfang 2004; Szlezak 2007; Szlezak et al. 2008; UNEP 2008).

This article contributes to the discussion by further developing a theoretical framework for analysing SCP programmes and by providing a case study of three selected European pioneers: Finland, Sweden, and the UK. As a theoretical starting point lies the idea of three classes of organizing principles for sustainability Princen (2003), valid especially for sustainable consumption and production. These classes are: co-operation, efficiency, and sufficiency. As a class of organizing principles, co-operation includes principles related to the process, participation and learning aspects of sustainability. To better reflect this whole array, the principle has been renamed “deliberation” in this article. Further, the efficiency principle embodies the idea of obtaining more from less and with less environmental cost whereas sufficiency emphasizes sustainable consumption by encouraging restraint and limits to resource consumption.

Organizing principles regularize collective behaviour with certain rules and procedures promoting particular values and ideas (Princen 2003, p. 44). This article develops this idea further by stating that the organizing principles for SCP can be enacted either weakly or strongly. Moreover, distinguishing between these versions is important; otherwise, the true nature of a programme can remain concealed in an analysis. Whereas the strong applications of a given principle promote structural changes with commitment and coordination, targeting, resourcing, and monitoring (Cherp et al. 2004), weak applications lack several of these qualities, thus resulting in a scattered selection of actions.

On the basis of the analysis, this article concludes that the pioneering SCP programmes represent mainly weak strategies towards deliberation, efficiency and, especially, sufficiency. The pioneering SCP programmes contain a broad spectrum of tools and ideas, some of which are strong. However, they are not carefully constructed roadmaps that would show how to meet the envisioned challenge. In fact, the programmes demonstrate the tendencies of the governments to outsource the responsibility for SCP to the shoulders of non-governmental actors such as individual businesses, NGOs, and consumers.

The analysis is based partly on the SCP programme documents of Finland, Sweden, and the UK and partly on the various mappings, follow-up reports, and research papers on the topic. The reason for choosing these programmes for a case study is that they were among the

first published on a national level in 2005. Further, they all take the form of action plans, which makes it easier to discuss them together. In Sweden, the new government decided not to endorse the programme for implementation (Szlezak 2007, p. 5). However, the programmes in Finland and UK remain among the most comprehensive national SCP programmes in the world, thus serving as model cases (UNEP 2008, p. 22). The structure for the article is as follows: first, the framework for analysing SCP programmes is presented. Then, an analysis about the case programmes is provided, together with some background information. In the end, the provisions of the analyses are summarized and discussed.

## Framework for Analysing SCP Programmes

Traditionally, environmental policy has focused primarily on how to transform production through pollution control and eco-efficiency rather than on consumption (Southerton et al. 2004, p. 2). The concept of sustainable consumption and production has been on the international agenda since the early 1990s. The Rio Summit (1992) represented a watershed in the international community's way of thinking, and the focus of environmental policy shifted from production alone to consumption and production. In 2002, however, reports noted that the implementation of sustainable consumption policies at the national level had been slow, leading to the proposal of a global framework programme (UNEP and Consumers International 2005, p. 7). Consequently, the Johannesburg Summit (2002) saw the agreement on the development and promotion of a 10-year framework of regional and national SCP initiatives (Clark 2007, pp. 493–494). In the framework, SCP was still firmly focused on eco-efficiency (Jackson 2006a, p. 4).

### Organizing Principles for SCP: Deliberation, Efficiency, and Sufficiency

According to Princen (2003, p. 39), two classes of organizing principles prevail in institutions of political economy, natural resources, and the environment. Organizing principles are rules and procedures that structure social behaviour. They protect and promote particular values, rules and procedures allowing, for example, particular questions to arise routinely (Princen 2003, p. 44). One of the prevailing organizing principle classes for SCP is co-operation, which has been renamed “deliberation” in this article to better reflect the informational elements of the category. Co-operation, or deliberation, promotes principles such as public participation, information sharing, and consensus. One could also argue that deliberation is the process dimension of sustainable development valuing incremental change and societal learning (e.g., Bagheri and Hjort 2007; Newman 2007). When making the analysis, proposals for co-operative arrangements, information production and dissemination have all been categorized as deliberation.

The other class of prevailing organizing principles is *efficiency*. Efficiency supports principles sensitive to technical and economic aims. These include economies of scale, intensification, and conservation (Princen 2003, pp. 39, 48–49). At the core of the definition of efficiency stands ratio: the proportion of output to input (Polimeni et al. 2009, p. 13). Thus, concrete applications of efficiency principles may include creating more GDP per tonne of iron ore or using less oil to move a car a given distance.

However, Princen (2003, p. 49) claims that deliberation and efficiency are not enough to arrest declines in ecosystem functioning. At this stage, the class of *sufficiency* enters the picture. Sufficiency engages overconsumption and compels decision makers to ask, for instance, when too much resource use risks ecological integrity. Thus, sufficiency promotes

principles such as restraint and precaution (Princen 2003, p. 44, 46–48). In the context of this article, sufficiency is considered as a class of organizing principles that attaches special significance to the sustainable consumption and demand side of SCP.

To sum up, when using this framework to analyse the policy proposals of the SCP programmes, the idea is to track the following elements: (1) proposals that promote the process of working on the topic, learning, and participation (deliberation); (2) elements that propose concrete measures but attempt mainly to enhance the ratio of negative environmental impacts and the desired product output (efficiency), and (3) proposals that aim to bring the consumption and production system within natural limits or at least attempt to diminish demand for more resources (sufficiency). It is important to notice that these categories are not mutually exclusive and that a proposal can reflect, for example, both deliberation and efficiency principles—or all three. However, to understand the full picture of the organizing principles the programmes reflect, also the general tone of language as well as other strategic elements must be analysed holistically. The next subsection develops this model further.

### Weak and Strong Strategies to Promote SCP Principles

The organizing principles of Princen (2003) can be used for policy analysis to discuss, for example, the extent to which national SCP programmes promote or neglect certain principles and whether such programmes apply the principles in a balanced manner. However, it also seems useful to combine Princen's principles with another popular approach in sustainability research, the idea of distinguishing between weak and strong sustainability strategies (e.g., Christoff 1996; Fuchs and Lorek 2005). The literature on weak and strong sustainability is burgeoning and has defined the difference between these two strategies in numerous ways. This article, however, essentially distinguishes between the weak and strong strategies to promote SCP by referring to three general principles of strategic planning (Cherp et al. 2004):

1. Comprehensiveness and co-ordination of a policy process: Are the organizing principles enacted as scattered reforms or as structural changes?
2. Commitment behind the process: Who bears the responsibility for leading and co-ordinating the change, individual actors or the political system?
3. Clarity of the policy path: Is there a roadmap for change with targets, resources, and monitoring?

Table 1 describes some of the main characteristics of weak and strong strategies to promote deliberation, efficiency, and sufficiency in SCP.

The weak and strong versions of different strategies towards SCP are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary: the weak versions may be necessary prerequisites for advancements in the field but are inadequate to solve the systemic problems (Christoff 1996; Fuchs and Lorek 2005). Moreover, the emphasis in SCP programmes on different organizing principles should also be balanced. Whereas deliberation could be seen as the framework that establishes certain principles for the process, efficiency provides a more restricted and sharpened version of SCP in which eco-efficient production and economic reforms play major roles. Meanwhile, a sufficiency angle broadens and deepens the analysis of problems and solutions, reminding us of the limits to growth and fostering discussion of the complexity of consumption and the need to promote a culture of restraint. The next section uses the theory framework presented thus far to analyse three national SCP programmes.

**Table 1** Characteristics for different strategies to promote SCP

	Weak	Strong
Deliberation	Narrow participation and learning processes involving a limited number of SCP stakeholders	A broad societal learning process with strong political leadership
Efficiency	Scattered technical and economic reforms towards eco-efficiency mainly by proactive businesses and consumers	A government-led structural change towards a more eco-efficient society
Sufficiency	Atomistic measures to address restraint in resource use, sustainable consumption and precaution; the primary responsibility for change rests on the shoulders of individual consumers	A politically co-ordinated process towards patterns and levels of consumption that remain within the Earth's limits

### Case Studies: The Pioneering SCP Programmes

The case countries in this article, Finland, Sweden, and the UK, were among the initiators of the SCP provisions of the Johannesburg Summit (Honkasalo, personal interview). Moreover, all three countries have maintained an active role in the United Nations (UN) by leading the international task forces that support the implementation of concrete SCP projects and that develop tools to promote SCP (UN DESA and UNEP 2008). The high profiles of these countries in the SCP discussion mean that the practices and policies they manage to develop at the national level will likely spread to wider circles as well.

In addition to their active role in international SCP policy development, Finland, Sweden, and the UK are countries with traditions of stakeholder involvement and of strategic thinking in ecologically sustainable development (Niestroy 2005, pp. 105, 253, 275). However, the case countries also differ in terms of policy styles. While Finland and Sweden are Nordic welfare states in which pro-active environmental policies have long played a central role, the UK is said to have taken pride in “muddling through” environmental challenges (Eckerberg 2000, pp. 209–210; Jordan et al. 2003b, p. 181; Sairinen 2000). Times change, of course, as do circumstances; since joining the EU in 1995, Finland has adopted a policy style described as pragmatic realism (Sairinen 2003, p. 77). Meanwhile, in the UK, placing the environment at the heart of government has been one of the prominent themes of the current labour government (Young 2000, p. 249). Still, Medhurst (2002) claims, the culture of the government of the UK must become more sympathetic to integrated and participative approaches.

The SCP programmes from Finland, Sweden, and the UK have been analysed by reflecting on the SCP programme materials vis-à-vis the theoretical framework as presented above. The focus has been on both individual action proposals and strategies en bloc. The main empirical material consists of programme documents: *Getting more and better from less* (The Committee on Sustainable Consumption and Production, Finland 2005), *One Planet Economy* (HM Government, UK 2005) and *Think twice!* (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, Sweden 2005). Follow-up reports (e.g., Berg 2007, 2008; Huvila 2008; Regeringskansliet 2007) and other SCP policy studies (e.g., Seyfang 2004; Szlezak 2007; UNEP 2008) have also contributed to the analysis. The content analysis of the organizing principles, policy tools, and strategic strengths of the programmes has been both qualitative and quantitative. However, because the quantitative analysis process has also involved a considerable amount of qualitative interpretation, the percentage shares of

different policy proposals reflecting a particular organizing principle or policy tool category should be seen only as rough measures, not as precise indicators.

#### Finland: “Getting More and Better from Less”—Through Deliberation

In the future Finland will base its economy on forms of production that increase national wealth and well-being without depleting biodiversity or exceeding the carrying capacity of natural systems through their environmental impacts. (The Committee on Sustainable Consumption and Production, Finland 2005, pp. 3–4)

The first case country to be analysed, Finland, provides an example of a broad, insightful, and comprehensive SCP programme, the process of which, however, reflects no particularly strong government commitment. Thus, the SCP agenda is promoted through co-operation, knowledge production and dissemination; the organizing principle of *deliberation* plays a major role in the Finnish SCP programme and process. The percentage shares of action proposals that reflect deliberative aspects of SCP account for just below 60%. However, the figure does not reflect the fact that deliberation is also promoted in many key elements of the programme document, such as the foreword by the ministers and several section titles. Moreover, each of the action proposals includes a list of various stakeholders who are supposed to participate in the implementation of the proposal. On the other hand, nearly 70% of the proposals deal with promoting efficiency and 20% with sufficiency. This shows a certain balance in the approach of the programme, even though efficiency and deliberation clearly dominate over sufficiency.

In addition, the very making of the Finnish SCP programme further reflects the principle of deliberation: a committee of 31 members worked for a year and a half to arrive at a consensual proposal. The members represented various ministries as well as other stakeholders of the SCP field such as business and industry, labour unions, environmental organizations, and research institutes. Pre-studies and expert presentations formed an integral part of the process, and a citizen consultation also took place on a web forum (Nurminen 2008). The committee unanimously accepted the programme *Getting more and better from less—Proposals for Finland’s national programme to promote sustainable consumption and production* in June 2005, and 38 organizations also gave their statements on it (Ilomäki and Hildén 2005). The following year, the government approved the programme as an integrated part of the national sustainable development strategy.

Finland’s SCP programme provides a vision for the year 2025, mainly qualitative targets and 73 proposals for action. From this perspective, the structure follows the recommendations of UNEP (2008, p. 33). However, the themes prioritized by the government include only the following: (1) the development of economic instruments, (2) an action plan on ecological public procurement, (3) the establishment of a material-efficiency service centre for businesses and consumers, (4) the promotion of sustainable development through education, research, and other policy tools, and (5) stakeholder dialogue to set material- and energy-efficiency goals (Huvila 2008, p. 7). As the prioritized themes reveal, the *efficiency* principle plays a central role in the government’s SCP agenda. Also in the programme document, technology and knowledge have been placed at the level of section titles, and the very name of the programme *Getting more and better from less* appears to reflect the efficiency principle.

Regarding applications of the *sufficiency* principle in the Finnish SCP programme, sufficiency is also emphasized in the programme rather broadly, but in a weak manner:

Environmental limits are mentioned several times, and the vision for the year 2025 includes the goal of staying within the carrying capacity of the Earth. Further, the chapter *Fewer material goods, but a higher quality of life* asserts the idea that the rising trend in material consumption should peak in the foreseeable future. In addition, less material-intensive consumption modes, such as service consumption and the communal use of goods, are promoted throughout the programme. The rebound effect receives mention, and the programme even addresses controversial issues such as the harmful impacts of advertising. However, when examining more closely those action proposals of the Finnish SCP programme that implement sufficiency principles, it is easy to note that many of the measures proposed lack political strength. The majority of the sufficiency proposals involve only knowledge production and dissemination even though the housing chapter lists a few more stringent measures, including one on lowering room temperatures.

In general, the Finnish government seems to have a somewhat ambiguous approach to the whole SCP programme. The implementation of the programme receives mention in the Government Programme for the years 2007–2011 (Prime Minister's Office, Finland 2007, p. 56). Still, progress has been even more modest than the aforementioned governmental priorities would have promised. Some of the main results of implementing the programme thus far include the establishment of the material-efficiency centre with a staff of four persons, an action plan on sustainable public procurement and a research programme that has produced knowledge on, for example, the environmental impacts of household consumption. Regarding the more structural acts, such as long-term policy guidelines to reshape the taxation system, little evidence of concrete progress could be linked to the SCP programme process (Huvila 2008; Nikula 2008).

In short, the actions implemented on the basis of the Finnish SCP programme have been rather vague and scattered (see also Huvila 2008). The programme is rich and contains language that promotes sufficiency principles, but it lacks the necessary political power. Needless to say, the programme does not provide a clear roadmap with targets, resources, and timetables. Thus, in addition to the few implemented proposals mentioned above, some of the main outcomes of the Finnish SCP programme seem to be linked to the deliberative making of it. In an analysis based on interview material (Berg 2007), the members of the SCP committee expressed their disappointment with the outcomes of the programme but still their general contentment with the process itself. A great deal of learning appears to have taken place during the committee work. While stakeholder commitment to the Finnish SCP programme itself is somewhat weak, some actors have initiated their own projects loosely related to the theme. Because many of the committee members hold key positions in the SCP field, the support given to their learning and empowerment processes has already had some effects. Still, the advantages obtained for the SCP programme through the deliberative strategy are clearly no substitute for the lack of governmental leadership.

UK: The Eco-Efficient “One Planet Economy”

We need a major shift to deliver new products and services with lower environmental impacts across their life cycle, while at the same time boosting competitiveness. (HM Government, UK 2005, p. 43)

The SCP programme of the UK provides an example of a somewhat stronger strategic application of efficiency in particular, as well as deliberation principles. However, the UK programme also exemplifies a rather narrow SCP approach and difficulty in implementing

sufficiency beyond the minimum of research and consumer information. Still, from the perspectives of both efficiency and deliberation, quite a comprehensive SCP programme is in place, and stakeholders seem to evaluate its implementation more favourably (Berg 2008) than that of the Finnish programme previously. Moreover, sustainable consumption experts such as Jackson (2006a, p. 7) have suggested that the UK's SCP programme has initiated a continuing and wide-ranging process of evidence review and deliberation that has already had a "significant impact" on national policy. Indeed, the UK government seems to be showing some commitment to the agenda. Still, the number and ambition of new, concrete proposals in the SCP programme documents is modest, and clear targets and resources receive only sporadic mention.

The UK programme consists of two parts. The first part, *Changing patterns: UK Government framework for sustainable consumption and production*, was published in 2003. The second part, *One Planet Economy: Sustainable consumption and production*, which this article analyses more in depth, appeared as a section of the UK sustainable development strategy. Its preparation process included a broad consultation during which stakeholders were engaged at different levels. In a web-based consultation, a diverse range of individuals and organizations provided 844 responses. Other activities, which varied between regions and included surveys and workshops, generated an additional 757 responses. The broad, though rather pre-structured, consultation process can also be seen to reflect the general *deliberation* orientation of the UK's SCP programme. Actually, more than 70% of the action proposals in *One Planet Economy* promote the principles of deliberation. The special character of these proposals is that many of them deal with enhancing co-operation, especially on the international level, but also with national stakeholders and sectors. Some examples include the different round tables and forums proposed in the SCP programme, such as the Sustainable Consumption and Production Business Task Force and a new Sustainable Design Forum.

Of the three pioneering SCP programmes analysed in this article, the UK programme has the clearest focus on *efficiency*, with more than 70% of its action proposals reflecting this organizing principle. The programme emphasizes a win-win situation between the environment and the economy, and that government and business can work together to address SCP-related challenges on behalf of the consumer. The idea is to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, deliver environmentally friendlier products and services to the market, and improve the effectiveness of production processes.

Regarding the application of the *sufficiency* principle in the UK's SCP programme, critiques of growth and technology are totally absent, but the name *One Planet Economy* still seems to reflect the idea of ecological limits. However, only 10% of the 97 action proposals provided in the *One Planet Economy* enhance sufficiency, and all of them are rather weak in strategic terms. In general, the entire Sustainable Consumption section of the *One Planet Economy* is particularly weak, perhaps because, as was pointed out in SCP expert interviews (Berg 2008), politicians in the UK find it difficult to interfere with the consumer sovereignty. Thus, the SCP programme highlights unsustainable trends but fails to push consumers to reduce their consumption. The essence of SCP appears to represent merely the idea of consuming "more efficiently and differently" (HM Government, UK 2005, p. 51). Moreover, Seyfang (2004) analyses the first part of the SCP programme (DEFRA and DTI 2003) and identifies a bias towards individualistic, market-based policies: the belief holds that technological advances in production will provide environmental improvements without radical changes to lifestyles, and the importance of addressing economic growth in the context of SCP is ignored.



While discussing the outcomes of the UK's SCP programme, the experts pointed out that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), in particular, had been realizing the SCP agenda by conducting research projects, making institutional changes and pioneering projects with certain product groups (Berg 2008). In addition, SCP had also acquired some degree of high-level commitments. For example, David Miliband, who was then<sup>1</sup> Secretary of State for DEFRA, had been talking about "one planet living," a concept with a clear reference to sustainable consumption and production. In addition, business, a key player in making SCP real in the UK context, had been reacting to the challenge posed.

Still, the experts also pointed out that compared to the climate change agenda, for example, the SCP programme lacks leadership, vision and resources, and important factors such as the Treasury have remain rather uncommitted. Indeed, the UK's SCP programme is still far from the ideal, which would combine all the different organizing principles and strategic strengths pictured in the Table 1 above. From many perspectives, one could describe the SCP programme as typical of the UK Labour government (Niestroy 2005; Seyfang 2004; Young 2000): it sets up advisory bodies, prefers market institutions and persuasion, and takes into consideration the prudent use of natural resources. At the same time, sustainable consumption in particular has been managed at "arm's length" (Hobson 2004, p. 134).

#### Sweden: "Think twice!"—A Few Steps Towards Sufficiency and One Step Back

Sustainable household consumption means a consumption of goods and services that meets human needs and provides increased quality of life while at the same time minimizing the negative impact of consumption on health and environment, to benefit fair and just global development. (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, Sweden 2005, p. 5)

Sweden's abandoned SCP programme *Think twice!* provides an example of a rather strong application of the sufficiency principle along with substantial proposals on promoting eco-efficiency. In this sense, the agenda of the programme is the most balanced of the three compared cases: Fewer than 60% of the 56 proposals reflect the efficiency principle, whereas more than 40% implement the sufficiency principle. Deliberative elements are also in place, and approximately 70% of the action proposals have a deliberative element. Compared to both Finland and the UK, however, the programme has more of a "top-down" flavour, and its action proposals comprise, for example, the largest percentage share of traditional governmental regulation:<sup>2</sup> 11% in the Swedish programme, 1% in the Finnish one and 3% in the UK programme.

A stronger role for the government can be considered as a typical approach of (Social Democratic) Sweden with its long tradition not only of addressing eco-efficiency but also of limiting resource use. While an impressive array of government initiatives for building an

<sup>1</sup> Interviews for this study were conducted in June 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Environmental policy instruments can be categorized in various ways. This article has contrasted traditional regulation with so-called new environmental policy instruments (NEPIs) (Jordan et al. 2003a, pp. 3–14). NEPIs comprise market-based instruments such as taxes and economic incentives, voluntary agreements mainly between government and business and informational devices such as advertising and labels. NEPIs have a tendency to decentralize environmental governing. As policy measures, NEPIs emphasize the ideas of shared responsibility, the participation of stakeholders and, often, the market mechanism as well (Sairinen 2000, p. 257, 2003, p. 90).

environmentally sustainable Sweden has generally been available, the government's goal has been rather efficiency than democracy (Eckerberg 2000; Niestroy 2005). As the example of *Think twice!* shows, this focus can be also a weakness for a policy programme, as it renders the programme more vulnerable to changes in government.

Published in 2005, *Think twice!* was intended to be only the first household-oriented part of the Swedish programme to promote SCP. The second part was planned to address SCP in business and the public sector but was never published due to the change in the government. In the elections of September 2006, Sweden's Social Democratic Party, which had been in power for 12 years, was replaced by an alliance of conservative parties. The new conservative government chose not to endorse *Think twice!*. Thus, Sweden's progress report, *Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production* (Regeringskansliet 2007) simply omitted *Think twice!* from a list of national level initiatives that create conditions for the country's SCP work. Meanwhile, the report did mention programmes such as Sweden's Action Programme for Growth and Employment together with a national strategy for regional competitiveness, entrepreneurship and employment.

Despite these setbacks, *Think twice!* provides an interesting focus for analysis. The programme was written by the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs. The preparation of the first part of the SCP programme showed no particularly strong application of the *deliberation* principle. The work was conducted by the ministry and an inter-departmental working group consisting of representatives from all ministries. After a ministerial memorandum on the topic was finalized, it was sent for a stakeholder consultation. The stakeholders included, for example, different official bodies, trade unions, NGOs, communities, and regional authorities. After the consultation, the programme was re-written and sent to the Parliament of Sweden for approval.

Regarding the application of the *sufficiency* principle, the name of the programme, *Think twice!*, already emphasizes the role and responsibilities of individual actors. However, some of the proposals also reflect a stronger application of the sufficiency principle. In general, *Think twice!* provides for a broad discussion of human needs and sustainable lifestyles, and at some points, it criticizes the prevailing eco-efficiency strategy of promoting SCP by drawing attention to the rebound effect: the programme notes that although technological development has yielded to considerable environmental benefits, the growing consumption space has to a large extent served to increase unsustainable consumption, which undermines sustainable development (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, Sweden 2005, p. 4).

Still, *Think twice!* involves some ambiguity as, on the one hand, it problematizes technological development and economic growth but, on the other hand, states that "growth is a prerequisite for sustainable development" (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, Sweden 2005, p. 3). Eckerberg (2000, p. 244) has noted that this conflict appears to be inherent to the Swedish Social Democratic thinking on sustainability: its vision for a green welfare society embodies a conflict between continued economic growth and the protection of the global environment.

In *Think twice!*, some examples of policies with a sufficiency-related focus include the following: individual recordings of hot running water and electricity, an environmental tax on air travel, and municipal energy advisory services. Meanwhile, proposals promoting *efficiency* include regulations for supporting on more energy-efficient housing, the obligation of major fuel providers to offer renewable fuels and carbon dioxide-differentiated vehicle tax. Also, on the policy proposal level, the deliberation element is much less applied than in Finland or in the UK. Still, forum on sustainable household consumption and empowering of the consumer movement belong to the proposals with a co-operative focus.

In brief, while the language in particular of *Think twice!* reflects a more comprehensive spectrum of SCP principles than the UK programme does, all programmes share the problem of inadequate government commitment and thus lack clarity and resources. Rather, the programmes are more collections of diverse proposals for action than transparent strategies of systemic change. Still, as the Finnish SCP programme has managed to survive the change of one coalition government to another in 2007, a less government-led way of policy making clearly seems to carry certain benefits. On the other hand, the Swedish Progress Report (Regeringskansliet 2007) shows that a substantial number of reforms mentioned in *Think twice!* have moved forward despite the change of government. Thus, abandoning the Swedish SCP programme may have been less dramatic an act than it first seemed.

### Summary of the Analysis

Some of the most important findings of this study include the differences and similarities in the organizing principles for SCP as presented in the pioneering SCP programmes of Finland, Sweden, and the UK. Generally speaking, efficiency and deliberation principles dominate over the sufficiency approach, particularly when it concerns strong and concrete action. However, the dominance of efficiency and deliberation is far from uniform in the SCP field. For example, Sweden's weak sufficiency approach also highlights the role of responsible consumers and the government's commitment to support them. The Swedish programme's language differs from the eco-efficient economy and production approach in the UK where the SCP programme places heavy emphasis on inspiring business but adopts a somewhat ambiguous position vis-à-vis the role of consumers. Meanwhile, much of the SCP programme work implemented in Finland thus far could be described as deliberation: the focus has been on promoting knowledge production and dissemination as well as stakeholder involvement even though the programme documents define the agenda broadly and in rich detail. Table 2 summarizes the quantitative and percentage shares of policy proposals that reflect deliberation, efficiency, and sufficiency in each of the case countries.

Further, certain languages and approaches, such as cross-disciplinary thinking and the life-cycle approach, are similar in all the SCP programmes analysed. The programmes note the serious trend as well as the complexity of the SCP field and sketch some bold visions for the future. However, the concrete actions described in the programmes seem to be only the first steps towards a possible future transition. Actually, the programmes miss the middle ground of the SCP policy puzzle: they describe only the desired long-term outcomes and put forward the short-term actions but omit the medium-term targets as well as timetables and financial commitments. In short, as frameworks for informed decision making (UNEP 2008, p. 33), the pioneering SCP programmes provide no strong, clear and

**Table 2** Policy proposals reflecting different organizing principles for SCP

Country		Total	Deliberation	Efficiency	Sufficiency
Finland	Count	73	42	50	15
	Pct.	100	58	69	21
UK	Count	97	71	69	10
	Pct.	100	73	71	10
Sweden	Count	56	38	32	23
	Pct.	100	68	57	41

balanced roadmaps but rather weak, mixed toolboxes. The path to be taken, to a large extent, remains to be cleared, and the leadership of the governments may be vague. Many pressing political questions are left unaddressed in the field. However, for those willing to assume responsibility for SCP, the programmes offer support and some guidelines.

### Discussion: SCP Programmes as Means for Outsourcing Responsibilities

To further develop the argumentation above, awareness of the possible tendencies of SCP programmes to *outsource* the responsibilities of promoting more sustainable consumption and production patterns seems worthwhile. Researchers have previously noted this phenomenon of governments using policy to shift their responsibilities to non-governmental actors, particularly in analysis of sustainable consumption policies or green consumerism (e.g., Hobson 2004; Maniates 2002; Moisaner 2001). However, responsibilities can easily be shifted not only to consumers but also to businesses or NGOs. The characteristics of such policy outsourcing include a clear disparity in the challenges taken up and the means or incentives provided to a third party assigned to act on these challenges. Thus, outsourced policies rely on the motivation of non-governmental actors or their resources for their implementation or both. While outsourcing policies and responsibilities may be either a wise or an unavoidable strategy in situations when a government has no capacity or legitimacy to act, in many situations, this poses a problem for the transparency of policy making. Such circumstances can blur the limits of the image and actions of policy making and attach disproportionate expectations to a policy process.

In the pioneering SCP programmes analysed in this article, outsourcing seems to be a particular feature of the sufficient consumption side of sustainable consumption and production strategies. In other words, the programmes really provide only a few examples of robust tools and approaches that would seriously address such issues as limits to growth and resource use, even though the Finnish and particularly the Swedish programmes frequently consider the issue. This further blurs the picture of who is really doing what, when and how. However, as the case studies presented in this article also demonstrate, programme documents do not tell the whole truth about SCP policy in a given county. Government commitment can fill in the missing parts later on or, alternatively, waste the opportunities provided in SCP programmes. Thus, rather than aiming at a programme that appears beautiful on paper, securing a high level of government commitment to the SCP agenda would go to the core of programme making. Otherwise, the SCP programmes risk functioning as false reassurance and tools for outsourcing responsibilities rather than as means to drive the agenda further.

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