

What motivates Political Consumers? **Authors: Dietlind Stolle and Michele Micheletti**

For Online Forum: Politisierter Konsum – konsumierte Politik

Online discussion languages: English or German

First draft for the Special Issue on “The Underestimated Consumer-Power – Prospects for the New Consumer Movement” in “*Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*” (No. 4, 2005)

Introduction

Citizens have found new arenas and ways to express their political opinions and to exert political influence. We call these emerging action repertoires ‘political consumerism,’ which is when people engage in boycotts, ‘buycotts’ or in discourse about market practices with the aim of using the market to vent their political concerns, they are said to engage in the act of political consumerism. The narrow definition of political consumerism is therefore the *consumer choice of producers and products based on political and/or ethical considerations* (Micheletti, Follesdal & Stolle 2003). Political consumers choose particular producers or products because they want to change institutional or market practices. They make their choices based on considerations of justice or fairness, or on an assessment of business and government practices. Regardless of whether political consumers act individually or collectively, their market choices reflect an understanding of material products as embedded in a complex social and normative context, which can be called the politics behind products (Micheletti 2003a).

Political consumerism certainly is not a new form of activism. In the early part of the 1900s the White Label campaign, an anti-sweatshop labelling scheme, appealed to American women to buy cotton underwear for themselves and their children that was certified “sweatshop free” (Sklar 1998). In the 1960s, the United Farm Workers successfully employed consumer boycotts to put pressure on Californian farmers and landowners (Jenkins & Perrow 1977). African-Americans have also used the market as an arena for racial politics. They repeatedly incited boycotts to further the civil rights movement, with the Montgomery Bus Boycott as the best-known case (Friedman 1999; Goldberg 1999; King 1999). In the 1970s and 1980s boycotts were used as a tool in the worldwide campaign against the Apartheid regime in South Africa (Seidman 2003). Part of the globalisation movement deliberately uses consumer behaviour as a political tool (Bové & Dufour 2001).

Anecdotal and first statistical evidence suggests that the use of political consumerism is on the rise in recent decades, partly as a result of globalisation processes. Although there is hardly any survey material on consumer boycotts and buycotts, scholars have shown that several forms of political participation including boycotts become increasingly a political tool (Goul Andersen & Tobiasen 2003; Inglehart 1997, 313; Norris 2002, 198; Petersson et al. 1998, 55; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti 2005). Scholars also claim that the number of boycotts organised worldwide is increasing (Friedman 1999).

Political consumerism is particularly visible in Scandinavia, where scholars have studied the phenomenon for decades. The Swedish Study of Power and Democracy found that using boycotts for societal and political purposes (within the past 12 months) had increased from 15 percent in 1987 to 29 percent in 1997 (Petersson, Westholm & Blomberg, 1989; Petersson et al.,

1998, 55). Boycotting ranked third as a form of political participation in both the 1987 and 1997 surveys, making it a more frequent form of political participating than contacting civil servants, a civil society association, politician, or media actor and allowing oneself to be represented by working in a political party and civil society association. It was outranked by signing a petition and contributing financially to a cause (Petersson et al., 1998, 55).

Given the steady rise of political consumerism in advanced industrialized democracies, it is even more puzzling that the phenomenon has been neglected in most contemporary discussions of political participation and involvement (Dalton 2000; Putnam 2000; Schlozman 2002; Skocpol & Fiorina 1999; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). With this article we intend to fill this gap in political participation research. Our core argument is that acts of political consumerism can be conceptualized as a form of political participation. An exclusive focus on traditional forms of participation that target the political system *per se* entails the risk that innovations in the participation repertoire of citizens remain unnoticed; this in turn could lead to the false conclusion that political participation in general is in decline (Dalton, Scarrow & Cain 2004). In the next section, we first offer a theoretical argument as to why political consumerism should be considered a form of political participation, and why it is relevant to the current debate about the nature and character of political participation. Second, we examine who political consumers are, and determine their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. In a subsequent third section we analyze the motivations of political consumers. What are their political and societal values, orientations and attitudes? Finally, we conclude about the implications of the new findings for the research on political consumerism.

The data for this paper include the European Social Survey as well as a Swedish national survey (SOM 2003) that includes several questions on political consumerism¹. The Swedish survey questions are part of our research project “Political Consumption: Politics in a New Era and Arena” financed by the Swedish Council of Research (Vetenskapsrådet). The questions tap a variety of different aspects of citizens’ use of political consumerism. To find political consumers in both data sets we defined them as people who either have boycotted or buycotted for political, ethical or environmental reasons in the past 12 months. To analyze why they are political consumers we asked questions about the effectiveness of forms for political engagement, their trust in and views on institutions (governments, multinational corporations, civil society associations, global protest groups), and what they consider as important when buying groceries and clothing/shoes. At present this is one of the most comprehensive data on political consumerism in existence.

Political consumerism as a form of activism

Political consumerism and other emerging forms of participation are an essential, though often neglected element of the current debate about the decline of civic participation. Traditional or conventional forms of engagement are losing ground, most notably in the USA, but to some extent also in other western democracies (Putnam, 1995, 2000, 2002a). Citizens in many countries not only refrain from voting and joining political parties, but they also tend to participate less actively in all kinds of voluntary associations and other social activities (Blais et al., 2004; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Petersson et al., 1998; Putnam, 2002a; Wattenberg, 2002). However, several arguments have emerged to counter the claims of a decline (Stolle and Hooghe, 2005). One of the fundamental lines of critique is that the promoters of the decline thesis capture only one side of a more complex social trend because they focus exclusively on the disappearance of traditional forms of participation while neglecting the participation styles and methods that are rapidly replacing the old (Gundelach, 1984). These critics of the decline thesis argue that citizens today, and especially the younger generations, prefer participating in

looser and less hierarchical informal networks as well as various lifestyle-related, sporadic mobilization efforts (Bennett, 1998; Eliasoph, 1998; Lichterman, 1996); often, such participation is directed toward spheres distinct from traditional politics (De Hart et al., 2002; Dekker and Hooghe, 2003; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Lowndes, 2000; Putnam, 2002a; Wuthnow, 1998). These doubts about the exclusive use of measurements of formal memberships and organizations have been echoed by scholars working in the field of gender and politics, who maintain that the exclusive focus on participation in traditional politics misses how marginalized groups of the population participate in social and political life more informally (Williams, 1998). Both historical and contemporary studies of consumer activism show that, for example, women, and particularly housewives, were and are predominantly involved in this activity (Ackelsberg, 2003; Bohstedt, 1988; Burns et al., 2001; Micheletti, 2003b; Orleck, 1993; Young, 1994).

Recently, agreement has been expressed that the decline of formal and traditional groups is “offset at least in part by increases in the relative importance of informal, fluid, personal forms of social connection” (Putnam, 2002b: 411). Participation in informal local groups, political consumerism, involvement in transnational advocacy networks, the regular signing and forwarding of e-mail petitions, and the spontaneous organization of protests and rallies are just a few examples of the growing importance of informal organization, individualized action, and network mobilization (Ayres, 1999; Bennett, 2003; Deibert, 2000; Eliasoph, 1998; Halkier, 1999; Norris, 2002; Peretti and Micheletti, 2003; Sörbom, 2002; Wuthnow, 1998). However, no systematic data sources have so far captured these phenomena of social and political engagement (Dalton et al., 2004).

Third, the study of these forms of participation forces us to reconsider where we locate political participation. Traditional forms of participation link citizens to democratic government. Even in recent revisions of the political participation literature both the government and the state are seen as the ultimate targets for political action (for example, Dalton et al., 2004: 127–8). However, as states tend to lose control or meet with competition from other spheres over the authoritative allocation of values in society, citizens seek new arenas for political participation. Political shopping, the forwarding of political e-mails about companies’ labor practices, culture jamming (the use of humor and symbolic images from the corporate world to break corporate power), and so on are examples of political action repertoires through which citizens circumvent traditional channels for political participation to address the market and companies directly. The example of political consumerism makes clear that citizens use political values and goals to target selected companies, international organizations, or simply public attention. The goal is not always national legislative change, as national governments are not trusted to regulate international labor practices successfully. The study of political consumerism and other such action repertoires therefore forces us to expand the number and types of political targets citizens choose for their engagement.

Fourth, do citizens who use these forms of participation turn away from national politics and national political institutions? In other words, do citizens adopt these modes of participation because they feel alienated from the political system, which would in effect mean that such behavior is the weapon only of outsiders? Theories of risk society or sub-politics and post-materialism explain the occurrence of emerging forms of political action by highlighting how citizens increasingly develop a lack of trust in the capacity of government (Beck, 1992; Inglehart, 1997). Citizens fear that government either does not understand or cannot control new uncertainties and risks that characterize society today and search for new ideas, arenas, and methods to work on these important political problems (Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón, 1999). As a result, they choose to take on this responsibility themselves rather than delegating it to

professional political actors (Beck, 1997). Concerns about governability and ungovernability therefore can motivate citizens to venture into new or simply different forms of political participation. These theoretical investigations offer several hypotheses and research questions regarding the value orientations of citizens who utilize these action repertoires.

General Characteristics of Swedish Political Consumers

When political consumers are defined as people who state that they either have boycotted or buycotted products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons almost 50 percent of Swedes between the ages of 15 and 85 years can be said to be political consumers. These people have either (1) participated in a boycott, (2) used a labeling scheme, or (3) both boycotted and “buycotted” in the past year. 31 percent are “only boycotting” and 44 percent “only buycotting” political consumers. Nearly 30 percent have done both. Table 1 characterizes political consumers.

[Table 1 about here]

The bivariate analysis presented in Table 1 can be summarized in seven points. First and most importantly, women stand out. 52 percent of women compared with 43 percent of men are political consumers. This result has also been found in other surveys in Sweden and internationally (Petersson, Westholm, & Blomberg, 1989; Petersson et al., 1998; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004), and we analyze it more closely in a later section.

Second, political consumers are not very young people. They are disproportionately middle-aged citizens, with the largest group in the age range of 30-39. The youngest citizens (15-19) and the oldest citizens (60 +) are less involved in political consumerism. Third, political consumers tend to be more highly educated than non-political consumers, a result also found in the Danish survey mentioned earlier (Goul Andersen & Tobiassen, 2003, 46) and generally in studies on political participation (e.g., Petersson et al., 1998, 89; Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Citizens with university and college education are more than twice as likely to be political consumers as citizens with only elementary school education.

Fourth, although a report by EU Organic Food Marketing Initiatives and Rural Development shows that Swedish consumers pay less than consumers in the rest of the EU for organically grown food (Øresund Food Excellence, 2004), Swedish organic food labeled-goods (KRAV) and fair trade goods (Fair Trade/Rättvisemärkt) often cost more—or are perceived to cost more—more than non-labeled goods (Konsumentverket, 2004; Rättvisemärkt, 2004). The substantial difference in prices for several products leads us to wonder whether political consumers are more often citizens with higher income. Table 1 shows that household income is indeed important. The ratio of political consumerism between citizens in the highest income groups compared to the lowest income group is 1.5: 1, that is, it is one-and-one-half times more likely that the respondents in the highest income category are political consumerism than those in the lowest income category.

Fifth, political consumerism is more an urban than a rural phenomenon. Particularly people living in the largest cities (56 percent) are more often political consumers than those from less populated areas. This should not be interpreted to mean that political consumerism is not present in the countryside: 44 percent of people in the less populated areas are also political consumers.

Sixth and contrary to much of what is often said about political consumerism in the public debate, political consumers show disproportionately more general interest in politics than non-

political consumers. 78 percent of those who stated that they are very interested in politics are political consumers. Of those not interested in politics only 35 percent are political consumers. This finding is somewhat dissimilar from those of the Danish study mentioned earlier (Goul Andersen & Tobiasen, 2001, 49).

Finally, the results also dispel a common conception on the political views of political consumers. They are not left-wing extremists. The fact that nearly half of all adult Swedes are political consumers shows that the phenomenon is much more widespread. However, political consumers have more often a left political orientation (see discussion on Table 2) and more people who sympathize with the Left Party (68 percent) and the Green Party (67 percent) are political consumers. We find the largest number of non-political consumers among supporters of Social Democratic Party and Conservative Party, at roughly the 40 percent level.

Why political consumerism?

Political consumers are among the most resourceful citizens. They are highly educated and affluent. They are also highly interested in politics and engaged in many forms of participation. Political consumers are also among the most active members of society (data not shown, see Micheletti & Stolle, 2004). But why, given this profile, are they involved in the market as an arena for politics? What motivates a well-educated, well-paid, and politically resourceful person to decide that involvement beyond voting in elections, working in organizations, and contacting the media is necessary today? To probe these issues, we asked questions about the aspects that citizens find to be important when making decisions about what groceries and clothes/shoes to buy and whether they consider it the personal responsibility of individual consumers to pay attention to the ethical, political, and environmental quality of consumer goods. Figure 2 shows similarities and differences in how political consumers and non-political consumers view several dimensions of consumer products.

[Figure 2 about here]

We divided the sample into three groups: (1) non-political consumers, (2) people who are either boycotters or buycotters, and (3) people who have both boycotted and buycotted. Interestingly, the three types of consumers consider the price and quality of goods as well as their own and their family's health as the most important aspects when making shopping decisions. This means that political consumerism is not a selfless phenomenon because political consumers consider self-interest when they shop. However, political consumers are also other-oriented and give substantially more weight to the "politics of products" (Micheletti, 2003, 12-13) than non-political consumers. They look at clothing labels, lists of ingredients on packages, and labeling schemes to see whether the product leaves an ethical, ecological, or political footprint. They want to know whether their consumer choices have hidden environmental consequences and whether they have an impact on animal rights as well as on general working conditions in the countries that manufacture our consumer goods, and on other ethical and political considerations. They also think about how their consumer choices affect child labor.

We also asked if it is every consumer's personal responsibility to choose between different products and labels on the basis of ethical, political, or environmental considerations. Both groups of political consumers answered yes to this question. Those who both boycott and buycott are the group most concerned about "the politics of products" (see also discussion on Table 2 below). Finally, we asked for opinions on a proposal debated in Sweden about curbing the power of multinational corporations. We chose to probe opinions on multinational corporations because they are the focus of many political consumerist campaigns, with the ones

focusing on Nike and Nestlé as two of the best examples (Shaw, 1999, Baby Milk Action, 2004). Our analysis shows that political consumers were more sympathetic to the proposal, and the group that both boycotts and buycotts agreed most with it.

Other analyses reveal that political consumers are significantly more worried about environmental problems and climate change but much less worried than non-political consumers about typical issues for materialists, e.g., too many immigrants, unemployment, economic crisis, and terrorism (results not shown). This might suggest that political consumers exhibit a typical postmaterialist attitudinal profile.

In sum, Swedish political consumers think about more than economic and self-interested concerns when they make choices among products. They look beyond the material quality of products and pay attention to how and under what conditions products are made. They include other-regarding values into their purchasing considerations. They make purchasing decisions this way because they believe that each consumer must take a personal responsibility and purchase goods with ethical, political, and environmental considerations in mind. These considerations are tied to policy preferences as illustrated by the proposal to curb the power of multinational corporations.

But why do they choose the market as an arena of politics to express and work with issues of personal or “reflexive” responsibility? Are they dissatisfied with how established political institutions are dealing with important political problems? Do they, instead, focus on the corporate world and circumvent traditional channels for political participation?

Theories of risk society/subpolitics and postmaterialism help us analyze the survey data by highlighting how and why citizens increasingly develop a lack of trust in the capacity of the government (Holzer & Sørensen, 2001, 2000; Inglehart, 1997). These theories posit that citizens fear that government either does not comprehend or cannot control new uncertainties and risks that characterize society today and that they search for new ideas, arenas, and methods to work on these important political problems. If this is correct, we should find that political consumers are more distrusting of conventional institutions than other citizens.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 presents the results of a logistic regression model including several variables discussed above as well as measurements of institutional trust. Table 2 shows that most of our findings in the bivariate relationships presented in Table 1 still hold. More women than men are political consumers. Education continues to be an important factor that explains political consumerist involvement. Perhaps because of the inclusion of education, the influence of income is slightly reduced although still significant. Higher household income is significantly related to political consumerism after controlling for all other variables. A new result is that age is no longer important. Urban living is insignificant in explaining political consumerism after controls for political interest and education. Orientation on the political left is still important as are the results about political consumers being more involved in traditional politics and concerned about the individual consumers’ responsibility to consider ethical and political issues when buying products.

Two trust scales are included in the regression model. The first is a summated rating scale measuring trust in mainstream political institutions (parties, the parliament, the national and local government) and institutions of the European Union (the Commission and the European Parliament). The second scale taps trust in organizations that have a consumer profile, that is the

Swedish Consumer Agency and independent consumer organizations.¹ Interestingly, all else being equal, the general groups of political consumers trust mainstream political institutions less (our first scale) and consumer-oriented organizations more (our second scale). This finding is very important and needs to be analyzed more deeply.

[Figure 3 about here]

The second analysis examines the respondent's evaluations of the influence of several types of international and national political, economic and social institutions on people's living conditions. Do political consumers evaluate certain types of institutions more positive or negative than non-political consumers? As could be expected political consumers view international and citizens organizations more positively than non-political consumers. Political consumers evaluate the UN and the WTO as well as international consumer organizations significantly more favorably than non-political consumers. But the strongest difference between the two groups can be found in their evaluation of global protest movements. Whereas non-political consumers clearly see global protest movements as negative societal forces, political consumers are positively inclined towards them. Surely, the image of global protest movements is influenced strongly by the violent protest experiences in Seattle, Quebec and especially Göteborg, however, political consumers rate the positive influence of the overall movements higher than the European Union, the World Bank, multinational corporations, and the United States. The last two entities are viewed as extremely negative, especially when compared to the evaluations by non-political consumers. Interestingly, in question batteries which compare Swedish with other international institutions, the Swedish Government is viewed more positively than in comparisons with other domestic institutions. This is an interesting result that needs further scrutiny, because political consumers and non-political consumers both evaluate the Swedish Cabinet similarly.²

In sum, political consumers are critical in orientation (cf. Norris, 1999). They take a critical stance on mainstream, established domestic political institutions, the World Bank, and the United States. The analysis also shows that political consumers are more trusting of institutions that have the issues of transparency and accountability of consumer goods and the corporate world on their agenda, as exemplified by international and domestic consumer organizations and public consumer agencies. The result also reflects the ability of politically resourceful and concerned citizens to use the information provided by consumer-oriented institutions to develop their own forms of political activity in the marketplace. Political consumers are clearly more supportive of bottom-up global protest movements, but they do not value them higher than established international organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

Women as Political Consumers

Today women stand out as political consumers. However, a historical look at surveys with questions on boycotts shows that boycotting was a predominantly male activity in the 1970s. This pattern changed gradually over the subsequent decades: in 10 out of 16 West European countries included in the World Value Survey more women participated in boycotts than men. Women also predominate as boycotters in 9 of the 21 European countries included in the 2002 ESS survey. In fact, boycotting emerged as one of the few political acts in which we find a

¹ Both scales showed a Cronbach's alpha around .80.

² For all political institutions do we find significant statistical differences between political consumers and non-political consumers at the $p < .05$ level, except for the Swedish Cabinet.

reversed gender gap at the end of the 20th century (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Stolle & Micheletti, 2004).

[Figure 4 about here]

As shown in the cross-national distribution of boycotting in Figure 4, boycotting has become a near-routine form of engagement for women (particularly in Scandinavia). More women than men in all countries aside from Spain and Israel are more present as boycotters. However, the use of political consumerism to express political values is not evenly distributed. In Southern and Eastern Europe, boycotting as well as boycotting are not frequently used as a form of political engagement by women. These differences are most likely linked to the presence of national labeling schemes and other national factors that influence this form of transnational activism. They warrant further investigation (see Forno & Ceccarini, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004; Stolle & Micheletti, forthcoming). Moreover the largest reversed gender gap exists in countries where political consumerism is most widespread, which indicates that women are essential in bringing this political tool into mainstream use.

Available market studies from Sweden, Denmark, and the U.S. confirm this gender gap. They show that women stand out as users of organic food labels, the Max Havelaar fair trade label, and eco-labels for seafood respectively (LUI, 1999, 3, Klint, 1997, 28, Wessells, Donath & Johnston, 1999). LUI, a Swedish survey institute specializing in consumer research for the farming community, finds that women shoppers also stand out on such aspects as whether food is guaranteed free of salmonella, GMOs, growth hormones, medicines, chemical additives, and chemical pesticides (LRF/Ekologiska Lantbrukarna 2001, 21). The authors of the U.S. study on eco-labeled seafood conclude that “the gender of the respondent has an impact on choice, with women more likely to choose certified products across all species” and that “variables representing age, income, education, and political affiliation are generally insignificant individually and jointly...” (Wessells, Donath & Johnston, 1999, 51f).

So why more women? Perhaps their presence is just a legacy of the past: women have traditionally been family shoppers and have, on certain historical occasions, used their consumer power to change society (Micheletti, 2003 for a discussion; Orleck, 1993; Young, 1994; Hirdman, 1983). Another possible explanation is that women are still the gender that shops more frequently and are, therefore, come into more contact with ethical and political shopping opportunities. A third possibility is that women, unlike men, are particularly motivated to shop ethically and politically. They may, as research on risk thresholds shows, be more sensitive to environmental risks as threats to the health and safety of their communities and families (Davidson & Freudenburg, 1996).

[Figure 5 about here]

The SOM survey data can be used to test some of these hypotheses—we present here results for the gender differences in the frequency of shopping, knowledge of labeling schemes as well as trust and attitudinal differences. Interestingly, Figure 5 reveals that women as well as men who shop for groceries more frequently are also more engaged in political consumerism. This difference is statistically significant. Gender differences do not, however, hold for the shopping of clothes/shoes, and there is no clear linear relationship between shopping frequency and political consumerism. Rather, both those who shop for clothes/shoes less frequently and very frequently tend to be less aware of consumer labels or political consumer issues. Although people who shop for clothes/shoes less frequently are less familiar with labeled products, it is also true that too much consumption goes against the ethics of political consumerism. This last point reflects the critical attitude political consumers take toward pure consumer society. Overall

though, the predominance of women as political consumers cannot be explained by the fact that they shop more than men.

Is it maybe the case that women know more labeling schemes than men? The SOM data reveal that there is no significant difference between men and women in their knowledge of labeling schemes such as Bra Miljöval, Krav, Rättvisemärkt and Svanen (results not shown). The only gender difference is for the label scheme TCO Development: more women than men indicated that they have never heard of it. Yet for all labeling schemes (excepting TCO Development) included in the survey, women have significantly more trust in them than men. In other words, women tend to believe more strongly in their legitimacy.

We are still left with a puzzle. How can we explain women's predominant interest in political consumerism and trust in labeling schemes? Because women do not trust consumer institutions more than men, there are only two plausible explanations for the gender differences in political consumerism that can be found in the SOM data. First, women's political consumerism is triggered by their higher degree of membership in consumer and animal rights' organizations than men (results not shown). These memberships have several effects, as they connect women better through weak ties which are been found to spread information more easily through loose informal contacts (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). In consumer and animal rights' organizations, women receive information about consumer issues which can potentially mobilize political consumer behavior. The second explanation is related to gender differences in societal attitudes. Women significantly more than men care about other regarding issues when shopping for food and clothes/shoes (results not shown). They care particularly more about animal rights, working conditions in the production countries and environmental concerns when they buy groceries and clothes/shoes. This gender attitudinal difference has been confirmed in other surveys as well (see Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2004) and concern about these issues serves as an additional motivational source which influences women's shopping decisions.

Future Analysis of Political Consumers

More questions about political consumers need to be investigated to understand the phenomenon of political consumerism more completely. Social science research has now a rather good understanding of the socio-economic characteristics and gender of political consumers in Europe (Tobiasen, 2004; Strømnes, 2004; Ferrer-Fons, 2004). The pending research task is to study why people turn to the market as an arena for politics, that is, why they are political consumers. The research task is to gain knowledge on the motivational, contextual, and attitudinal factors that prompt people into political consumerism. Further analysis of the SOM data can enrich our understanding of the concerns of people who engage in political consumerism. This section offers a brief and preliminary outline of our plans for future analysis of the SOM data. It formulates four theses on political consumerism and indicates the variables from the SOM data that will be used to investigate them (see Micheletti, 2003, ch. 1 for the theoretical foundation for the theses).

First, the SOM data allows for an analysis of the *risk society thesis of political consumerism*. Are Swedish political consumers more concerned about risks than non-political consumers? As indicated in an earlier section, political consumers are more worried about environmental risks like climate change than non-political consumers. They are also less worried about concerns generally understood as material in nature (crime, immigration, and terrorism). Is this the case in other policy areas as well? Survey questions about perceptions of worrisome situations and Sweden's political and military situation can be used to explore the risk threshold of political consumers and non-political consumers and the gender-bias in political consumerism. The SOM

survey also includes data on the respondents' standpoints on proposals from contemporary Swedish public debate that indicate the immediacy of different policy problems on citizens' individualized political agendas. This data can also be used to explore the risk society thesis.

Second, the SOM survey can be used to investigate the *government/governance trust thesis of political consumerism* more thoroughly. Political consumers seem to trust more international organizations like the UN and the WTO, but the differences between political and non-political consumers are strongest when it comes to global movements and consumer-oriented institutions. Which aspects of these latter institutions are important for political consumers? How can we explain women's higher trust in labeling schemes, that is, their trust in new voluntary regulatory tools created by cooperation among business, civil society associations, and consumers? Another part of the government/governance thesis is "governability" (the steering capacity and effectiveness of government institutions), which will be tapped through questions about perceptions of how well government politics is conducted in various policy areas, how well government and different groups are working, how democracy works in different areas.

Third, the *globalization thesis of political consumerism* will be explored. Are Swedish political consumers more globally-oriented than Swedish non-political consumers? Our preliminary analysis suggests that political consumers care more about others involved in the production of consumer goods. This is particularly true for women, who are consistently more other-regarding than men. Survey data on the power of multinational corporations, solidarity with people in other countries as well as additional multivariate analyses of questions about the importance of working conditions in manufacturing countries and whether or not the product is Swedish in origin for purchasing choices will be used to examine the globalization thesis more fully.

Fourth is the *postmaterial values thesis of political consumerism*. Are Swedish political consumers more postmaterialist in orientation than non-political consumers? Can a postmaterialist positioning help explain the predominance of women among political consumers? The cross-national pilot project on political consumerism among university students that preceded the SOM survey showed that postmaterialist attitudes emerge as the most important explanatory variables of political consumer behavior. A variety of data from the SOM will be used to test the postmaterialism thesis further. Among the data items are information on membership in "postmaterialist" associations like environmental, peace group, and animal rights groups, green-oriented political preference, and judgments on the importance of free time. Further analysis of the SOM data is the first step in mapping the mentality of political consumers. The second step is to compile survey data from different countries. The European Social Survey, World Value Survey, data from the Citizen Involvement in Democracy Survey (CID), and national surveys can be used for cross-country comparisons of the characteristics and mentality of political consumers. The third step is to use this rich comparative survey data together with contextual variables to understand why the phenomenon of political consumerism is more prevalent in certain countries over others. An important question here is why political consumerism is so prevalent in Scandinavia. What role does, for instance, political culture, gross national product, quality of civil society, cleavages in society, media attention, favorable public policy, market actors and their characteristics, and the presence of political consumerist labeling schemes play in making the market an accessible arena for politics?

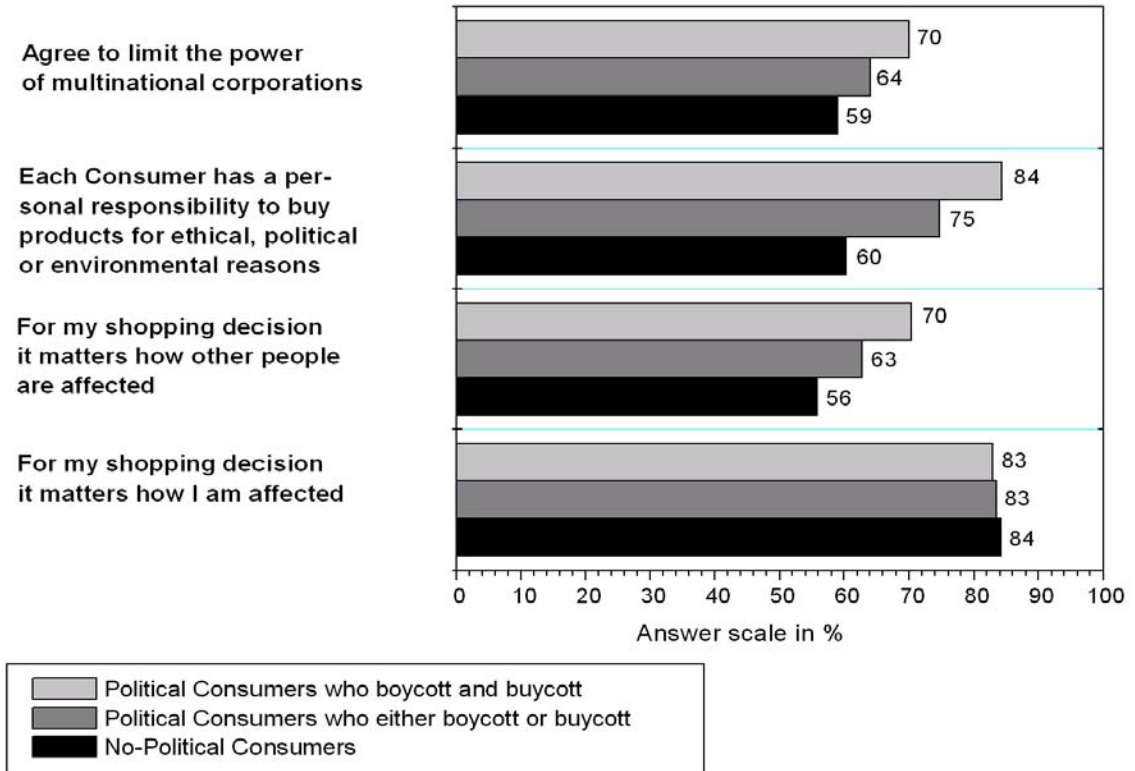
Table 1. Who are Swedish Political Consumers (in percentage)

	Political consumers	Number of responses
Men	43	808
Women	52	876
Age		
15-19	32	115
20-29	52	211
30-39	56	266
40-49	52	286
50-59	49	337
60	41	469
Level of education		
Low	32	448
Middle	47	714
High	64	503
Household income (in SEK)		
100 000	35	87
101 000 – 200 000	40	256
201 000 – 300 000	48	314
301 000 – 400 000	48	293
401 000 – 500 000	52	272
501 000 – 600 000	48	173
601 000 – 700 000	58	125
700 000 or more	56	101
Place of residence		
Countryside	44	257
Village	43	411
City or larger village	49	738
Large city (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö)	56	267
Interest in Politics		
Very interested	78	101
Rather interested	63	656
Not very interested	43	701
Not at all interested	35	183
Political sympathy		
Left Party	68	148
Social Democratic Party	42	568
Center Party	50	129
Liberal Party	53	196
Conservative Party	42	267
Christian Democratic Party	52	113
Green Party	67	78
Total	47	1673

Source: SOM 2003.

Figure 2

Orientations toward the Market as an Arena for Politics



Source: SOM 2003 (N=1,673)

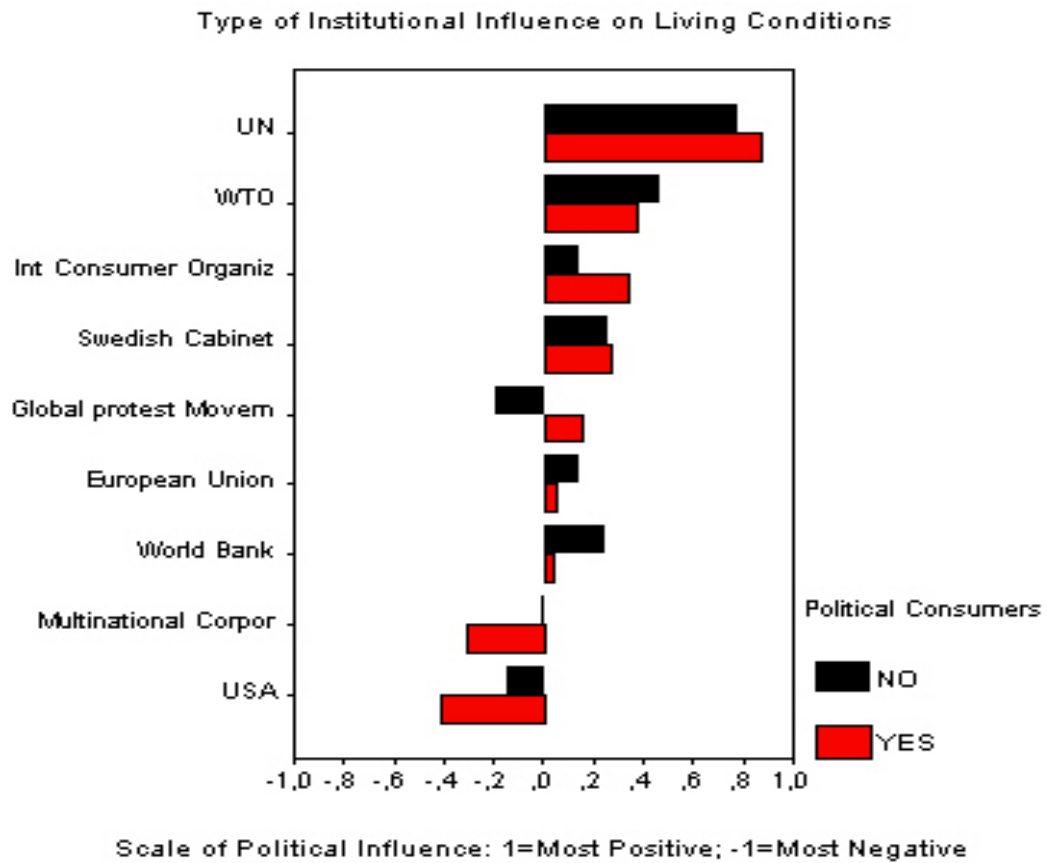
Table 2: Multivariate Model for Political Consumers

	Explaining political consumerism
Cte.	-.96** (.462)
Demographic variables	
Gender (male=ref.)	-.26 (.127)
Education	****
Low	ref.
Medium	-.88**** (.191)
High	-.35** (.149)
Income	.46* (.254)
Age	ns
15-19 years	ref.
20-29 years	-.25 (.298)
30-39 years	.14 (.223)
40-49 years	.16 (.212)
50-59 years	.12 (.199)
60 years and up	-.07 (.194)
Stockholm/Göteborg/Malmö (no=ref.)	.203 (.173)
Left Right Scale (Klart till Vänster=0)	-.82**** (.244)
Participation	
Conventional Political Participation (no=ref.)	-.40** (.155)
Political Attitudes	
Political Interest	1.44**** (.277)
Political Consumerism is Citizen's Responsibility	3.35**** (.288)
Political Trust	-1.40**** (.362)
Trust in Consumer Institutions	1.63**** (.377)
Nagelkerke's r2	.31
Log Likelihood	1582.457
Chi square	****

Source: SOM 2003.

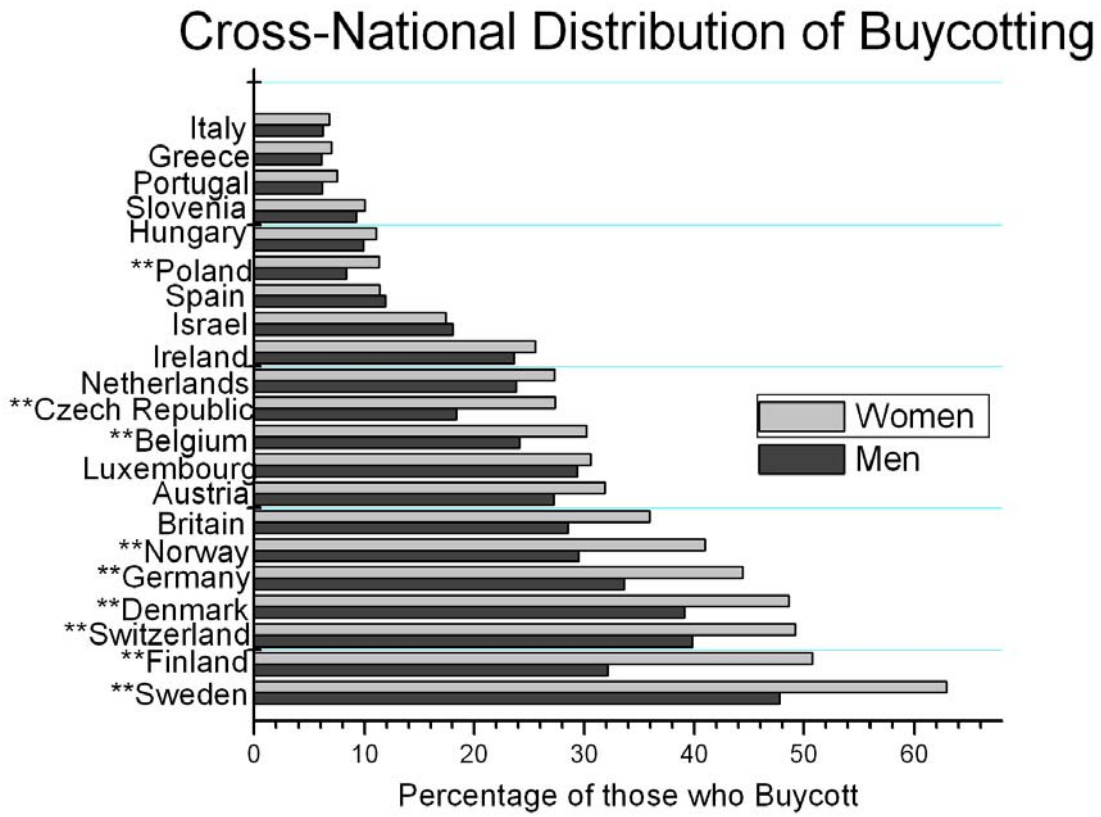
Entries are results from a binary logistic regression, B and (SE) ****<.001, ***<.01; **<.05; *<.10
 Dependent Variable: Political consumption (coded 0 for not done; and 1 for done)

Figure 3



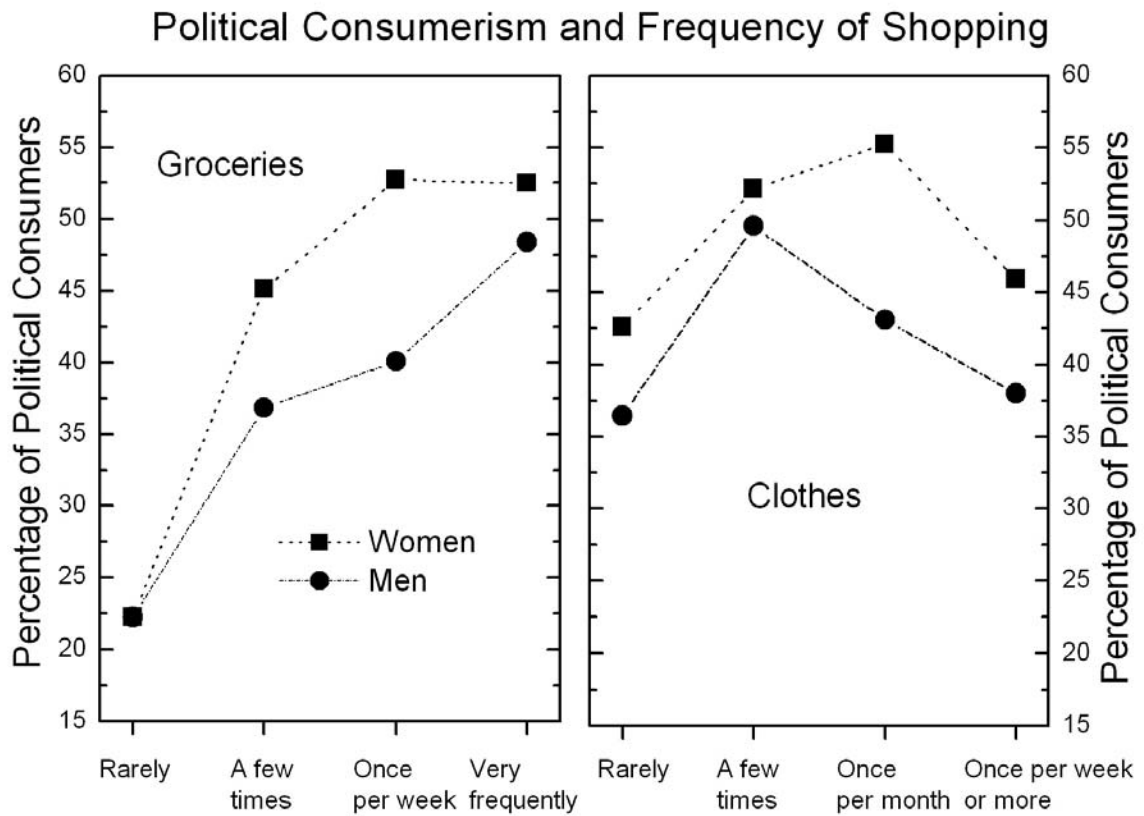
Source: SOM 2003.

Figure 4



Source: European Social Survey 2002. For more information see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

Figure 5



Source: SOM 2003.

Note: The data points represent percentages of political consumers per category of frequency of shopping. The number of respondents is 1748 and 1754 for shopping of groceries and shopping of clothes respectively.

References

- Baby Milk Action 2004. *Every day 4000 babies die from unsafe bottle feeding*.
<http://www.babymilkaction.org/pages/boycott.html>. Accessed April 2004.
- Barnes, Samuel and Max Kaase et al. 1979. *Political Action*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation," *American Political Science Review* 89 (2): 271-94.
- Davidson, Debra J. and William R. Freudenburg. 1996. "Gender and Environmental Risk Concerns. A Review and Analysis of Available Research," *Environment and Behavior* 28, No. 3: 302-39.
- EuroBrometer. 1997. *Images of Germany, Consumer Issues, Electronic Information, and Fair Trade Practices, January-February 1997*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. ssd.gu.se/kids/swe/ssd0626.html. Accessed January 1, 2002.
- Ferrer-Fons, Mariona 2004. *Cross-National Variation on Political Consumerism in Europe: Exploring the Impact of Micro-Level Determinants and Its Political Dimension*. Paper for the ECPR Joint Sessions, Uppsala, Sweden. Workshop 24 "Emerging repertoires of political action: toward a systematic study of postconventional forms of participation".
- Forno, Francesca and Luigi Ceccarini. *From the Street to the Shops: The Rise of New Forms of Political Action in Italy* (?) Paper for the ECPR Joint Sessions, Uppsala, Sweden. Workshop 24 "Emerging repertoires of political action: toward a systematic study of postconventional forms of participation".
- Goul Andersen, Jørgen and Mette Tobiasen. 2001. *Politisk forbrug og politiske forbrugere. Globalisering og politik i hverdagslivet*. Aarhus: Magtudredningen, Aarhus Universitet.
- Granovetter, Mark. S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1360-1380.
- Hirdman, Yvonne. 1983. "Den socialistiska hemmafrun." In *Vi kan, vi behövs! Kvinnorna går samman i egna föreningar*, edited by Brita Åkerman, Yvonne Hirdman, and Kajsa Pehrsson. Stockholm: Akademilitteratur AB.
- Holmberg, Hans-E. 1999. *Konsumentundersökning om ekologiska produkter/KRAV*. Stockholm: LUI marknadsinformation AB.
- Holzer, Boris and Mads Sørensen. 2001. *Subpolitics and Subpoliticians*. Arbeitspapier 4 des SBF 536 Reflexive Modernisierung. Munich: University of Munich.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Klint, Jakob. 1997. *Max Havelaar-mærkede produkter - en undersøgelse af forbrugeren og storkunden*. Copenhagen: CASA.

- Konsumentverket. 2001. *En undersökning genomförd i oktober 2001 av InfoOne*. Stockholm: Konsumentverket.
- Konsumentverket. 2004. "Ekokalkylen." Accessed in April. www.ekokalkylen.konsumentverket.se/
- LRF and Ekologiska lantbrukarna. 2001. *Vägen till marknaden. Ekologiska produkter*. Stockholm: LRF.
- LUI Marknadsinformation AB .1999. *Konsumentundersökning om ekologiska produkter/KRAV*. Stockholm: LUI, unpublished report.
- Micheletti, Michele 2003. *Political Virtue and Shopping. Individuals, Consumerism, and Collective Action* New York: Palgrave.
- Micheletti, Michele, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle. 2003. *Politics, Products, and Markets. Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Micheletti, Michele and Dietlind Stolle. 2004. "Politiska konsumenter: marknaden som arena för politiska val." In S. Holmberg & L. Weibull (Eds.), *Ju mer vi är tillsammans*. Gothenburg: SOM-institutet.
- Norris, Pippa, ed. 1999. *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2002. *Democratic Phoenix. Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Øresund Food Excellence . 2004 "Organic Foods in Sweden Cheapest of EU Nations." Accessed in April. www.foodoresund.com/composite-279.htm
- Orleck, Annelise. 1993. "'We are that Mythical Thing Called the Public': Militant Housewives during the Great Depression," *Feminist Studies* 19: 147-172.
- Petersson, Olof, Anders Westholm, and Göran Blomberg. 1989. *Medborgarnas makt*. Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Petersson, Olof, Jörgen Hermansson, Michele Micheletti, Jan Teorell, and Anders Westholm. 1998. *Demokrati och medborgarskap. Demokratirådets rapport 1998*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Rättvisemärkt. 2004. *Vad kostar rättvisemärkt*. Frågor och Svar om Rättvisemärkt. Accessed August. www.rattvisemarkt.se
- Shaw, Randy 1999. *Reclaiming America. Nike, Clean Air, and the New National Activism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

SIFO. 2001. *Vad händer med Sverige?* Stockholm: SIFO, unpublished report.

Soil Association. 2001. *Organic Food and Farming Report 2000*.

Stolle, Dietlind and Marc Hooghe. 2004. Emerging Action Repertoires-An Empirical Investigation of New Forms of Participation. Paper delivered at the ECPR Joint Sessions Workshop *Emerging Repertoires of Political Action* in Uppsala April 13-18, 2004).

Stolle, Dietlind, Marc Hooghe and Michele Micheletti. 2004. "Politics in the Supermarket: A Comparative Study of Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation," manuscript under review.

Stolle, Dietlind and Michele Micheletti. Forthcoming. "The Gender Gap Reversed," in Brenda O'Neill and Elisabeth Gidengil (eds.), *Gender and Social Capital*. London: Routledge.

Strømnes, Kristin. 2003. *Folkets makt. Medborgerskap, demokrati, deltagelse*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Tobiasen, Mette. 2004. *Political Consumers in Denmark*. Paper for the ECPR Joint Sessions, Uppsala, Sweden. Workshop 24 "Emerging repertoires of political action: toward a systematic study of postconventional forms of participation".

Wessells, Cathy, Holger Donath, & Robert J. Johnston. 1999. *U.S. Consumer Preferences for Ecolabeled Seafood: Results of a Consumer Survey*. Rhode Island: Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, University of Rhode Island. Unpublished report.

Young, Iris Marion. 1994. "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19: 713-38.

ⁱ The questions on political consumerism were included in the 2003 SOM survey, which annually conducts a postal national survey of Swedes between the ages of 15 and 85 surveys (for more information see som.gu.se/english.htm2003). This survey contains the most developed measures of political consumerism to date with 1,816 respondents. It builds on the question on the use of boycotts for political reasons first asked in Sweden in the national citizen survey (medborgarundersökningen) 1987 and the question on the use of labeling schemes first used in the Danish Study of Power and Democracy.