

## Why do individuals consume energy in a climate-friendly way, the case of Wadebridge?

Climate change and environmental issues are a key discussion point in modern politics, and there is a great deal of debate surrounding why individuals engage in climate friendly behavior. Through this essay I will be identifying and assessing the reasons why individuals consume energy in a climate-friendly way. I will be doing this by critically reviewing the concept of dual role of individuals and determining just how far intrinsic and extrinsic motivations affect why individuals consume energy in a climate friendly way. I will then use the concept and apply it to my findings from Wadebridge and Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network (WREN) to determine what motivates people to engage in climate friendly behavior. I conclude that the reasons why individuals engage in climate friendly behavior are not straightforward. Both a combination of consumer and citizen factors, such as moral beliefs and economic incentives, attribute to an individuals norms and influence how they respond to climate friendly behavior. I also note that external factors, such as the media, contribute to why people respond to climate friendly behavior. It is a combination of citizen and consumer influenced personal norms and external influences that can be used to understand why individuals consume energy in a climate friendly way.

When assessing why individuals consume energy in a climate-friendly way it is key that we look at the concept of a dual role of individuals. The dual roles individuals are faced with are citizen and consumer. Citizens are individuals whose decisions are based on a separate set of values with their acts motivated by an altruistic concern for a larger community<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, consumers are individuals guided primarily by individualistic concerns, who respond to economic incentives and make rational choices determined by their personal preferences and the constraints they face<sup>2</sup>. An individuals response to climate friendly behavior is influenced greatly by the choice the have made to be a citizen or consumer. As a citizen, they'd act in a way that benefits the community, or as a consumer they'd act in a way that benefits just them. If an individual is looking for self-enhancement such as power and achievement<sup>3</sup> when engaging in climate friendly behavior, they are most likely a consumer influenced by economic incentives. However, if they are looking for self-transcendence such as benevolence and universalism<sup>4</sup> when engaging in climate friendly behavior they

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<sup>1</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 555

<sup>2</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 555

<sup>3</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 562

<sup>4</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 562

are more likely a citizen and are not influenced by economic incentives. The dual roles have a significant impact on an individual's behavior in general. A citizen based approach leads to altruistic behavior and pro-social values<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, those that take a consumer approach are more likely to obtain egoistic and self-centered behavior<sup>6</sup>. It is possible for an individual to have be both a consumer and a citizen but not at the same time. When using their personal norms to respond to a situation, their behavior and response will be shaped by their choice between a consumer or citizen role.

Although it appears that people are either a consumer or a citizen, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that individuals possess the ability to be both a consumer and a citizen depending on the situation. Berglund and Matti argue that people respond to their own personal values when deciding on citizen or consumer behavior, also known as a personal value system<sup>7</sup>. Rohan suggests that an individuals personal value system is the main determinant for people's immediate decisions on how to behave in real-life situations<sup>8</sup>. Environmental policy tends to focus on consumer behavior, as noted by Matti and Berglund when looking at Sweden's approach to environmental policy. It can be seen that although individuals possess the ability to be both a consumer and a citizen, there is conflict between the fundamentals of both. Consumers are motivated by economic incentives and respond to policy mechanisms that benefit them as individuals. However, citizens are the opposite. They do not respond to economic benefits and might even actively alienate them from the very causes it seeks to promote<sup>9</sup>. It is the fundamentals of consumers and citizens that generate a perceived conflict.

When looking at the case of Wadebridge as an example of why individuals consume energy in a climate friendly way, it can be seen that it is a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate individuals. Wadebridge is a town located in Cornwall that is attempting to source all its energy from renewable, local sources by 2020<sup>10</sup>. WREN attempts to engage the whole community, reduce energy consumption, generate renewable electricity, retain

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<sup>5</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 562

<sup>6</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 562

<sup>7</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 557

<sup>8</sup> Rohan M, J, 'A Rose by Any Name? The Values Construct', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Volume 4: 255-77, 2000

<sup>9</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 556

<sup>10</sup> What is WREN?, <http://www.wren.uk.com/wren-the-facts/about-wren>, viewed on 17th January 2015

economic benefits through schemes such as local ownership and establish a replicable model<sup>11</sup>. WREN can be used to determine why individuals consume energy in a climate friendly way and how and why people can become engaged in climate friendly behavior.

When deducing why individuals engage in climate-friendly behavior it is imperative that individuals are spoken too and assessed. As part of research for this paper, we interviewed some of the general public in Wadebridge to determine if they were members of WREN, and there reasons for doing so. This research, although on a small scale, is vital in determining if people engage in climate friendly behavior for altruism or egoism. The reasons why members engaged in climate-friendly behavior varied from person to person, suggesting that both consumer and citizen values play a key role in peoples attitudes towards climate change. By being a member of WREN, a fee of £1 for membership<sup>12</sup>, climate friendly behavior is occurring. One of the dominant reasons identified during the interviews for engaging in climate friendly behavior was economic incentive. This is economic incentive in the form of promotion of the business through the form of the WREN currency and saving money in terms of bill reductions. The owner of a fabric shop stated that she “is a WREN member largely for economic gain.” Though the use of energy-saving light bulbs in her store, another way of engaging in climate friendly behavior, she has seen savings in her electricity bills and this has been a motivating factor. It is not only an economical incentive that has encouraged members to consume energy in a climate friendly way, it is the sense of a community feel that comes with engaging in a town scheme. WREN is a scheme that is attempting to reshape that attitudes and values of Wadebridge, and this in itself invokes a community feel amongst the members. By promoting their own currency, the WRENS, businesses work together and engaging in climate friendly behavior goes from being individual based to community based.

The members of WREN show that the reasons for engaging in climate-friendly behavior are not simple. People are motivated by both altruism and egoism reasons and this can be seen when looking at people who have engaged in climate friendly behavior. When looking at the motivation and reason behind people engaging in climate friendly behavior, it is important the reasons why individuals choose not to engage in climate friendly behavior are assessed. These reasons can be used by policy makers or non-governmental organizations such as WREN to help create policy that successfully engages individuals in climate friendly behavior. With a population of around 10,000 – WREN has 1000+ members<sup>13</sup> which suggests that Wadebridge is an environmentally consciousness town. However, individuals who do not live in the town can become members and still not engage in climate change. When interviewing the

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<sup>11</sup> *WREN presentation to Lei Xie - & Exeter University*, PowerPoint Presentation, WREN, Wadebridge, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014

<sup>12</sup> What is WREN?, <http://www.wren.uk.com/wren-the-facts/about-wren>, viewed on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015

<sup>13</sup> *WREN presentation to Lei Xie - & Exeter University*, PowerPoint Presentation, WREN, Wadebridge, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014

general public, a large proportion of the feedback came from non-members who have chosen either to just not engage in climate friendly behavior or do engage in climate friendly behavior but not through WREN. One of the main reasons established for people not engaging in climate friendly behavior by being a member of WREN was lack of understanding. Many individuals hadn't heard of WREN and therefore don't engage in climate friendly behavior because they don't know how too. This can be applied to individuals all over the world. Individuals do not consume energy in a climate friendly way because they are not aware that they should or can. Education and promotion of environmental issues could lead to people engaging more in climate friendly behavior. Another repeated reason why individuals have chosen not to engage in climate friendly behavior is because of egoism reasons. Business owners noted that they did not have the time to engage in climate friendly behavior. For these individuals, climate friendly behavior is not a priority and is at times seen as a burden. One individual noted that she was "environmentally conscious" with sustainability and energy security being a large concern. However, "time constraints" prevented her from being a member of WREN and engaging in climate friendly behavior this way.

The results from the Wadebridge interviews suggest that there is not one set reason why people chose to engage in climate friendly behavior or not, there are numerous reasons and a number of external and internal factors that influence them. In the case of a few non-members in Wadebridge, there reasons for not engaging in climate friendly behavior stemmed from a climate skeptic view point. Studies have found that the public learns a large amount about science through mass media news<sup>14</sup>. If the media represents a negative image of climate friendly behavior, such as it being a waste of time, people are more likely to adopt a climate skeptic and not engage in climate friendly behavior. These influences we identified when interviewing people in Wadebridge. One shop owner noted that she no longer engaged in climate friendly behavior because of personal experiences with the environmental movement in the 1980s. The concept of climate friendly behavior here was viewed as a "waste of time" and personal experiences mixed with external factors such as the media influenced this behavior.

Wadebridge and WREN are an example of the conflict between the dual roles of the citizen. Those trying to engage individuals in climate friendly behavior, such as WREN, take a consumer approach and use economic incentives to promote climate friendly behavior. However, the empirical findings discussed above show that the citizens of Wadebridge respond to both consumer and citizen elements when deciding if they are going to engage in climate friendly behavior. When looking at the findings from members, it can be seen that those who have chosen to engage in climate friendly behavior have done so because of self-enhancement, a typical consumer motive. Those who are members are members and engage in climate-friendly behavior for economic gain. Models in economics

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<sup>14</sup> T. Boykoff Maxwell and Roberts J. Timmons, 'Media Coverage of Climate Change: Current Trends, Strengths, Weaknesses, *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, Human Development Report Office OCCASIONAL PAPER

generally assume that individuals' actions are guided mainly by external rewards<sup>15</sup> and this consumer-induced behavior can be seen when looking at members of WREN. It's when looking at the reasons why individuals have chosen not to engage in climate friendly behavior, by being a member of WREN, that we can see a conflict between the dual role of citizenship. Non-members showed that more is needed than just economic incentives to encourage climate friendly behavior. If WREN is to meet its targets by 2020, they need to consider a more varied approach to engaging individuals in climate friendly behavior that includes consumer and citizens.

To conclude, the reasons why individuals engage in climate friendly behavior are not simple. When looking at the dual role of individuals, citizen and consumer, it can be seen there are clear distinctions between the motivational factors that prompt people to consume energy in a climate friendly way. Citizens are individuals with concerns for the larger community and consumers are guided primarily by individualistic and materialistic concerns. Economic incentives, a policy tool used by most governments and NGOs, are not always the main reason why people consume energy in a climate friendly way. For consumers, it plays a large role, however for citizens it can be a deterrent. When applying the concept of dual citizenship to Wadebridge, we can see that there is clear conflict between the two roles. Those we interviewed stated altruism and egoism factors as motivation for engaging or not engaging in climate friendly behavior. The reasons why people consume energy in a climate behavior are both a combination of citizen and consumer factors. People want to do so for moral reasons and a sense of civic duty<sup>16</sup>. However policy mechanisms that revolve around economic incentives can have some success too. Individuals consume energy in a climate friendly way because of their own personal norms when deciding on consumer or citizen behavior.

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<sup>15</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 552

<sup>16</sup> Berglund Christopher and Matti Simon, 'Citizen and Consumer: the Dual Role of Individuals in Environmental Policy', *Environmental Politics*, Volume 15, Number 4, August 2006, page 551

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