



# VISIONS FOR CHANGE COUNTRY PAPERS

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Australia  
Brazil  
Colombia  
Egypt  
India  
Japan  
Lebanon  
Mexico  
New Zealand  
North America  
(Canada & USA)  
Philippines  
Portugal  
South Africa  
Sweden  
United Kingdom  
Vietnam



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry of the Environment  
Sweden

*Copyright © United Nations Environment Programme, 2011*

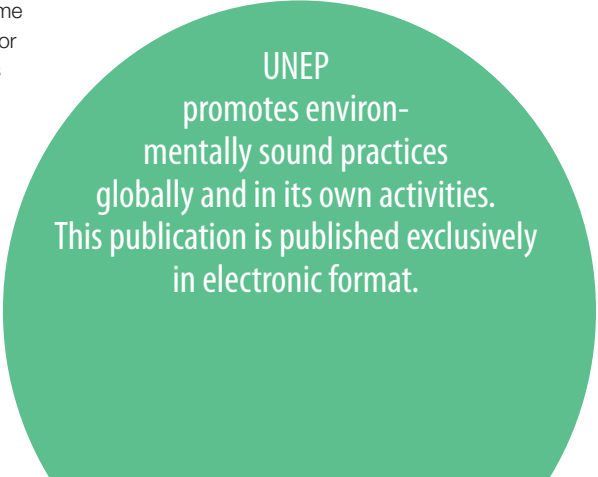
---

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided acknowledgement of the source is made. UNEP would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this publication as a source.

No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose whatsoever without prior permission in writing from the United Nations Environment Programme.

**Disclaimer**

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of the United Nations Environment Programme, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.



UNEP  
promotes environ-  
mentally sound practices  
globally and in its own activities.  
This publication is published exclusively  
in electronic format.

# VISIONS FOR CHANGE

FOR CHANGE

## Country Papers

*Based on the Global Survey  
on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL)*

**UNEP Division of Technology, Industry & Economics**  
Sustainable Consumption & Production Branch  
15 Rue de Milan // 75441 Paris CEDEX 09/ France  
Tel: +33 1 4437 1450 // Fax: +33 1 4437 1474  
E-mail: [unep.tie@unep.org](mailto:unep.tie@unep.org) // [www.unep.fr/scp](http://www.unep.fr/scp)

# Contents

Navigate through this pdf using the linked table of contents below. Return to this page by clicking on the Visions for Change icon in the top left corner.

1. **Australia:** "Young Australians – Active, Engaged and Motivated to Participate", Katherine Luckins, Juliette Anich and Katelyn Samson, RMIT University
2. **Brazil:** "Behavioral changes in Brazil and information needs", Akatu Institute for Conscious Consumption
3. **Colombia:** "Hotel Mamma - Changing the living 'chip'", Andrea Mendoza, Universidad de Los Andes
4. **Egypt:** "Urban Sustainable Lifestyles: A Perspective of Young Egyptians", Ahmed Hamza, Alexandria University
5. **India:** "Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles in India", V. Veeraghavan, Venkatesh Trust for Education and Excellence
6. **Japan:** "An analysis of Japanese results of the Global Survey for Sustainable Lifestyles", Midori Aoyagi-Usui, National Institute for Environmental Studies & Seiko Yamazaki & Yoko Yoshizawa, Dentsu Inc.
7. **Lebanon:** "Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles in Lebanon", Association of Business Continuity Middle East (BCME)
8. **Mexico:** "Sustainable Lifestyles and Young Adults in Mexico", Leticia Merino, Ayari Pasquier and Simone Buratti, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
9. **New Zealand:** "Flourishing: Young Lives Well Lived in New Zealand", Bronwyn Hayward, Holly Donald, Erina Okeroa, University Canterbury
10. **North America (Canada and USA):** "Sustainable Lifestyles and Young Adults in the New York, Montréal and Halifax Metropolitan Areas", Solange Tremblay, UQAM & Guy Lachapelle, University of Concordia
11. **Philippines:** "GSSL: the Philippines Case Study", Laiden G. Pedriña, Young Artists Fellowship for the Environment Inc.
12. **Portugal:** "GSSL country paper for Portugal", Maria Faria de Carvalho, Inspire
13. **South Africa:** "A glimpse into the lives of South African youth. Thoughts about sustainability", Morgan Strecker, Alison Swartz, Christopher J. Colvin, University of Cape Town
14. **Sweden:** "Skilled, Sensitive and sustainable: the Swedish Case", Ulrika Holmberg & Niklas Hansson, Centre for Consumer Science at School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg
15. **United Kingdom:** "UK Youth: The conflicts of contemporary lifestyles", Bronwyn Hayward & Tim Jackson, RESOLVE, University of Surrey & David Evans, University of Manchester
16. **Vietnam:** "Vietnamese Youth in the Paradox of Transition: How Concerns and Expectations Might Inspire Sustainable Practices", Dang Thi Anh Nguyet, Do Thi Huyen, Hoang Thanh Tam, Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, Nguyen Thanh Thuy, Centre for Development of Community Initiative and Environment

# Young Australians - Active, Engaged and Motivated to Participate

## Australia: 249 participants

Katherine Luckins, MA Fashion & PhD student, RMIT University (analysis and reporting)

Juliette Anich, MA Marketing, RMIT University (primary data analysis)

Katelyn Samson, PhD student, RMIT University (dissemination)

## A SURVEY ON SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES IN AUSTRALIA<sup>1</sup>

In Europe, sustainable consumption has been on the policy agenda for over a decade, however “sustainable consumption has failed to become a political or public issue in Australia” (Hobson, 2003, p149). There are three reasons why the Australian Government is yet to act:

1. the perceived political and systemic barriers,
2. because our economic systems fetishise growth, and
3. because consumption is considered central to our way of life (Hobson, 2003, p149).

In recent years, the Government has supported initiatives that promote eco-efficiency to end-consumers such as rebates for individuals investing in insulation or solar energy. There have also been numerous campaigns that encourage sustainable consumption behaviour such as “Global Warming-Cool it!” (The Australian Greenhouse Office 2001). Recycling initiatives have also been successful but there is no clear strategy that addresses consumer behaviour (Bentley, Fien & Neil, 2004, p21).

## DESCRIBING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS AND THE GSSL RESPONDENTS

The sample group<sup>2</sup> for this study included young adults of whom 29% were 18-23 years, 43% were aged 24-29 years, and 28% were 30-35 years. This group was 43% students and 57% working professionals with the median age group being 24-29 years. Students and young professionals were

invited to participate in the survey through a range of network and promotional avenues – predominantly in Melbourne. Surveys were distributed to students within a range of disciplines at RMIT University. The social networking site ‘Facebook’ was used to promote the survey to a broader audience. The survey was also distributed through young professional networks like the International Young Professionals Foundation.

Out of the respondents that selected an area of study, 20% of students were studying environment and ecology. This high proportion of respondents pursuing study in environmental field reflects the growing concern amongst young people about environmental issues as reflected in the other national studies. A Roy Morgan Research survey of 56344 respondents across Australia revealed that young people aged 25-34 years are the most likely to support immediate action in regard to environmental problems (Denniss, 2005 p3).

Born into a consumerist and increasingly globalised society, young Australian people are adaptive, curious, and culturally and socially aware. As they have grown up, young people today see the world to be filled with possibility that they explore through changing their living arrangements, travelling and through joining new social networks and groups. Demographers’ studies have revealed that young people are changing professions with much greater frequency than the generations before. According to Heath, young people change careers eight times before the age of 32 years (Heath, 2005). Young people are also influenced (and arguably driving) the increased pace of Australian life. The traditional working week (of 40 hours) has been replaced by the opportunity to work all hours in a society that operates 24/7. Within this time frame, young people are often engaged in full-time study and part-time work in order to further their professional lives and fund their lifestyle aspirations.

The sample group defined 22 different living arrangements, reflecting a cultural change towards transient lifestyles that is both economically and

<sup>1</sup> The Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles led by Sweden in the framework of the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production (<http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech>). The GSSL was conducted in close partnership with a large number of organizations and institutions, including the International Association of Universities (IAU) that has played a unique role in its dissemination.

<sup>2</sup> Total number of questionnaires is 249 (including 70 full questionnaires)



socially driven. Results reflect that many young adults have nomadic living habits where they move in and out of the family home. In Australia, young people will often move back to their family home between rental lease periods, between making alternative living arrangements and when they need to save money for a specific purpose (e.g., saving a deposit for a house or travel). A 2006-7 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) study confirmed that young people aged 20-34 years are staying in their family homes until later in life with 27% of young men and 18% of young women living at home at the time of the survey.

## TRANSIENCE AND DIVERSITY

Approximately, 43% of the respondents were students (inc. working students) and the remaining 57% were young professionals. It was challenging to separate the data into young professionals and students. This inquiry assumes that in order to become a young professional, you must be a student first. However this was not the case with this sample. Some young people have not studied in tertiary environment but are working and supporting themselves full-time. Others have gone back to full time study after working; others are still combining study and work life. Once again, this willingness to adapt and change lifestyles around study and working pursuits reflects the transient approach to life. With reference to their working life, the respondents specified over 130 different job titles to describe their working roles. This broad type of response communicates clearly the scope and variety of possible employment opportunities and the specialist nature of the modern workplace.

When the respondents in this study were asked to identify their main sources of income, the results demonstrated that 68% rely on their salary, whether this is for full or part time work, and 20% rely on family support and other supplementary income. Based on the standard of living index in the survey, four out of five respondents encountered some kind of socio economic hardship.

## ACTIVE AND ENGAGED YOUNG PEOPLE: POTENTIAL FOR PARTICIPATION

Respondents demonstrated a high level of pride in their neighbourhoods. Most respondents focused on the human aspect of the neighbourhood and expressed concern for the lack of relationships between themselves and their neighbours:

*"I haven't met my neighbours yet, I would like a chance to meet some of them" (F, 18-23)*

*"I wish people could talk to each other with less suspicion, but I guess suspicion is just a part of living in a city where people don't really know each other" (F, 30-35)*

Some respondents reported that their transient lifestyles restrict them from engaging with their neighbours and community as they are regularly moving neighbourhoods due to short lease contracts:

*"I've only been in the neighbourhood a short time and in the six months have seen my neighbours for a quick 'hello' only twice. I like the idea of a strong community bond and trust among the community. I suppose we lead such busy lifestyles that we no longer make as much time." (F, 24-29).*

This reflects the earlier findings, that young people believe the transience of their lifestyles can prohibit their significant involvement in their local communities. When asked whether they agreed that their local area was friendly, most respondents answered positively with 45% strongly agreeing and 42% tended to agree. When asked whether they would feel comfortable asking neighbors to watch out for their house and property when they are absent, respondents answered positively.

Half of the respondents tended to agree that they could have influence on local policies and 16% of respondents strongly agreed that this was the case. When asked whether they were informed about their neighborhoods management, many respondents (47%) answered that they were well informed. Despite the fact that 48% of respondents have only lived in their neighborhood for a short period of between one to four years and 28% of respondents have been living in their neighborhood for less than one year, young people are interested in being involved and influential within their local community. The data showed that over 90% of young people were involved in some sort of community-orientated organisation and 60% were involved with more than one organisation. Of these respondents, 45% were involved with human rights organisations, 28% were affiliated with a youth, sport or cultural club and 9% were involved with an environment or sustainable development organisation. The number of respondents involved with an environmental or sustainable development organisation was significantly lower than those involved with human rights organisations and this may reflect that human rights issues have

a well-established history in Australia, whereas environmental concerns have emerged prominently in the last five years.

## DEFINING GLOBAL PRIORITIES – ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMING FIRST

When asked to rank the global priorities from most important to least, respondents clearly prioritized the fight against environmental degradation over other challenges as 42% stated that this was the most important global challenge. The need to improve and develop social services (such as education and health) was also considered the most important by 12% of respondents. Given that respondents clearly grasp the significance of preserving the natural environment, if environmental and sustainability organizations and networks were more accessible, more widely publicized and more directional, these concerned young adults would engage in supportive action.

## EVERYDAY LIFE VALUES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Respondents described their current life through four major elements: opportunity, flexibility, ownership and diversity. Overall the respondents seemed positive and outward looking in regards to their life and their outlook for the future. Many took the opportunity to talk about how lucky they were and how valuable their human relationships are to them that are current in their lives.

*"I am doing things I have wanted to do for a long time, I have the support and understanding of my friends and family, everything is good." (M, 30-35 years).*

Many respondents talked about being involved in activities they love, find worthwhile and allow them to fulfil their ambitions and goals.

*"I am doing things I have wanted to do for a long time, I have the support and understanding of my friends and family, everything is good" (M, 30-35).*

The majority of respondents displayed a high level of autonomy and competence in their answers. Some respondents are also very focused on acquiring ownership through material purchase such as house buying.

*"I have a great job, I work with young people who are re-engaging with education and who have experienced much oppression and marginalisation in their lives. It is a very exciting and inspiring work place. I am living in a share house in inner city Brisbane with 3 flatmates. It is*

*a big old house and there is a park across the road. I am paying off a mortgage on a block of rainforest 2 hours north of Brisbane and I have a really great girlfriend I have been dating for 1 1/2 years" (F, 30-35).*

### Housekeeping

Describing their domestic activities respondents focused on the functionality of the appliances rather than exploring the social purpose of their use.<sup>3</sup> The popularity of the television amongst respondents (53%) refers to its frequency of use, but its prominence could reflect that respondents value their evenings with friends and family around the television. In the same way, the high use of cooking appliances could reflect that this is not just a daily practice, but also a leisure pursuit.

When asked about what they would like to change in terms of their housekeeping, many cited a lack of time as a problem they faced and something they would like to change- "I would like more time like everyone else I'm sure." (M, 18-23). Some respondents wished to make changes to their social lives and many pledged to reduce water or compost waste, or expressed a wish for others to share their concern about ecological and social issues:

*"I would like to have composting for my house, and cut down the amount of plastics we use, and water because they can be wasteful" (M, 18-23).*

### Food

When buying food, the most popular option was the supermarket (34%), the local shops were also a common choice (24%), produce markets were the choice of 16% of respondents and the farmers markets and other direct sources were chosen by 13% of respondents. Regarding purchasing criteria, there were 38% of respondents who focused on value for money and the cost of food. There was nearly as many (36%) who focused on the quality in terms of freshness and healthiness. Another 20% were more motivated by the ethical concerns relating to their food choices and were interested in organic produce and ethical certification such as Fair trade and Free Range products.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents declared using the following appliances to enable domestic activities- 53% television, 32% electric stove or oven, 29% washing machine, 23% gas cooking, 22% internet, phone/mobile phone, 18% microwave, 16% radio, 12% Electronic music equipment inc stereos, 12% DVD players, 6% dishwasher, 6% electric kettle, 5% Wii/Playstation, 4% house lighting, 4% heating, 4% fridge, 3% ipod, 2% clothes dryer, 2% electric coffee machine, 2% toaster. The additional appliance categories had nominal use of below 2% of respondents.

Approximately 15% of respondents focused on buying local seasonal food and another 10% prioritised the environmental aspects of their food consumption, with a focus on reducing packaging. Convenience was the main driver for 9% of respondents. Many respondents seemed to value the overall experience of collecting their food, making time to enjoy going to the markets and making it a social outing. These respondents have developed this everyday 'chore' into a social activity of choice.

*"The local grocer is good because I get a 'hey buddy' and they know me and I know them and it's nice"*  
(M, 30-35).

Others enjoyed adopting a stance to support smaller local producers over major supermarkets or relished the variety of produce available.

*"I like the option of being able to support small businesses rather than having to rely on the large supermarket chains"* (F, 30-35).

When discussing their food choices, young people saw greater opportunity to pursue ethical and sustainable food choices than for other areas of their consumption. The focus on ethical and sustainable food choices in Australia has increased in recent years, with Fair trade solidifying its place in the Australian market, the beginnings of the locavore<sup>4</sup> market, the emergence of "skip-dippers"<sup>5</sup> (or Freegans) and the prevalence of farmers markets. Given the challenges that Australian farmers have faced while in drought, there has been a focus on food initiatives that support local food production and local farmers. For Australians, food is central to daily life and this may be why it is a focus for sustainable and ethical consumption. Respondents focused on increasing access to ethical, local and organic products and on criticising the large-scale supermarket operations. While some respondents directed blame, others assumed individual responsibility:

*"I should be more disciplined about avoiding supermarkets and buying organic"* (M, 24-29 years).

Some respondents wished they had more information to assist making ethical and ecologically-sustainable purchasing decisions:

<sup>4</sup> The locavore movement encourages a diet of local foods, often defined to be sourced within a 100 mile radius of the individual.

<sup>5</sup> Skip-dippers are anti-waste activists that source their food from rubbish bins with the objective to live off societies waste. Freegans are the same as Skip-dippers but this term and movement is recognised beyond Australia

*"I wish there was more organic food available and better labelling on food in relation to where it comes from, so I could make more informed choices."* (M, 18-23 years)

Respondents bought food from supermarkets despite their critical view of them because other options were not available. They also indicated that they would like genuine alternatives to supermarkets:

*"I don't like to buy from big supermarket chains, but sometimes they are the only place that is open"*  
(F, 30-35).

*"I wish farmers markets were on every day. They are on once a fortnight in our area"* (M, 24-29).

Another barrier between young people and more responsible and desirable food choices was cost:

*"I would like to see the price of fair trade and organic food become cheaper, without having a negative impact on the producers"* (F, 24-29).

## Mobility

When asked to identify how they get from one place to another, public transport was a popular choice (55%). Traveling by car was also a popular option as chosen by 40% of respondents. There were 25% who chose to walk and 23% who chose to ride their bicycle. This high result can be attributed to the significant proportion of young people living in inner cities so that they are close to work and study and can commute easily by bicycle or public transport.

Two major ideas arose about mobility benefits: convenience and freedom. The respondents were also divided between those that enjoy the exercise benefits of cycling and those that prefer the freedom of driving a car. Some respondents enjoyed being able to relax and have 'time out' on public transport. When explaining why they enjoy their form of transportation, participants focused on combining values such as convenience and sustainability, cost and reliability were also important factors.

*"I enjoy using public transport as it is cheaper and greener"* (M, 18-23).

*"I prefer to drive to work every day for convenience - far more fast & reliable than public transport in Sydney"* (F, 24-29).

In terms of their mobility, young people were very critical of the traffic and public transport management



in Australia. The main areas of concern were safety, inefficiency and accessibility.

*"Australia has a long way to go in improving the reliability/frequency of transport. It is very difficult for those who don't work in the city to catch public transport to work" (F, 30-35).*

*"Danger from motorists to cyclists and pedestrians, congestion and pollution, the negative feeling from observing traffic and people's angry responses to one another" (F, 24-29).*

*"I would use public transport a bit more if it was not over-crowded, frequently late, and irregular. I do not like living in a car-based city" (M, 24-29).*

### Expectations moving towards the future

When asked to envision their everyday lives in 10 years, respondents identified significant shifts due to both internal and external changes. While many had identified that their current lives were very busy, many forecasted that their lives would only become busier because of individual changes (like starting a family) or broader shifts.

*"More stressful, more busy, more hectic! Advances in technology do not necessarily mean we will have more time to ourselves" (F, 24-29).*

Advancements in technology and the social implications of such were a subject of great concern amongst young adults. While many respondents had a clear picture of their idyllic future life, scepticism and fear of the implications of technology were evident. A significant number of respondents referred to sustainability issues in their answers with predominantly grave concerns over what their lives will be like (and their children's) in only 10 years time. As one respondent predicted:

*"more mega-cities, more pollution, worse social, economic, environmental situations. Population far too large to be sustainable. Not looking good" (F, 30-35).*

One respondent was more uncertain - "totally unknown with climate change" (F, 30-35). Another was more optimistic.

*"I'm not sure. I hope it will be more conscious of how our actions impact on the environment around us, but also more connected with the people and places around us" (M, 18-23).*

When asked for further details about their ideal way of living, respondents often made mention of the principles of sustainability including caring for the natural environment and connecting communities. Other lifestyle values such as freedom, flexibility and comfort were also highly appreciated. Some respondents had difficulty aligning the principles of sustainability with their materialist values.

*"Living in a way that produces the least amount of impact on the environment and on other people, but allows me live comfortably and to achieve my goals" (F, 18-23).*

*- "I would love to have a really sustainable lifestyle, although I do like the luxury of consuming things" (F, 30-35).*

While some respondents focused on overcoming barriers such as perceived economic deficiencies, others focused on how they may 'make a difference' through their job or by making social changes. Envisioning their least preferable way of living, three undesirable characteristics were identified- isolation, restriction and being 'part of the problem' of climate change.

### INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Among respondents, the most popular scenarios within the survey were the urban garden and the bicycle centre. From this data, it can be suggested that young people are most interested in issues of mobility and food in terms of sustainability, or they find these the most accessible as suggested by earlier findings (that these two areas were defined by participants as 'sustainability-related').

The qualitative responses to the scenarios were more constructive in showing how respondents would envisage these scenarios fitting within the context of their everyday lives. Generally, respondents saw value in the scenarios and perceived that there would be many benefits and little compromise. As one respondent enthused about the urban garden proposal:

*"I think this is a practical solution to more than one problem. It addresses the need for improvement in areas like health and nutrition; building community; food security; land use; 'greening' city scapes" (F, 24-29).*

The qualitative responses also demonstrated that they were also very analytical and at times, critical of the various scenarios. As one respondent answered:

*"This scenario doesn't address the lack of infrastructure to make roads more bike-friendly. People still see cycling as inconvenient and less safe. Bike centres will just make it easier for people who are already pretty much converted to the idea"* (M, 18-23).

Many of the comments stem from a place of knowledge and understanding, which is consistent with the results of this study so far.

## TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

A quarter of respondents said they did not feel informed enough about environmental challenges and climate change, indicating that the remaining majority of respondents believe they are informed enough about environmental challenges. When asked to rationalize their answers, one respondent stated the following:

*"No-information only motivates and implants a seed for change. Mass change could occur if the government implemented things so that people could easily incorporate lifestyle changes. The little changes would work because they are easy - compost bins in the home. Car sharing / renting would only occur if the government mandated it. More realistically, people would purchase eco friendly cars if they did not cost so much. Make train fares cheaper also and you may see a difference"* (F, 24-29).

Answers like this were typical of the sample and suggest that young people are critical of the power of individualised action responding to information alone. Within these and subsequent responses, young people look to government as a key driver for change in a sustainable direction. Around 23% of them answered that they thought education about sustainability would be empowering or motivating. Some respondents delved into greater details about what kind of information would be constructive and influential in terms of making change:

*"I think if people were aware of the threat to their everyday life that climate change posed, they would be more willing to make small changes in their lifestyle"* (M, 18-23).

*"Maybe, I think most people are fairly aware of climate change. Though I guess lots of people don't realise their individual impact"* (M, 30-35).

As another respondent answered - "only if people experience immediate consequences of climate

change. It is hard to change habits for an intangible purpose" (M, 24-29). Others expressed concern about scaring people away with too much information or alienating people by amplifying feelings of guilt. Others thought that individual awareness would not suffice and thought that government needed to act to create change:

*"Firm facts and evidence of these changes will convince some people, but I'm certain the only way some others would change is if governments make policy changes which make it more expensive or inconvenient for them to live inefficiently"* (F, 30-35).

The majority of responses focused on respondents either maintaining the current status of living, therefore not making any more damage, or just equalizing their future behaviors. Given the urgency of climate change, these changes may not be enough to lead towards a more sustainable future.

When asked about what they think about the language of sustainability, many respondents gave their own definition, many of which resembled the well-recognised Brundtland definition that includes addressing the needs of future generation as well as caring for the current generations (Agenda 21), but others focused more on a tangible reduction of consumption, or on the opportunity to address what they had yet to do to reduce their individual ecological footprints:

*"In my opinion what makes a way of living "sustainable" is ensuring that we all do "our bit" during our daily living by being proactive in ensuring our environment is looked after for generations to come"* (F, 24-29).

*"Being less reliant on energy consumption, private vehicle use and having to purchase goods"* (F, 18-23).

*"Buying less clothes. Otherwise I live about as sustainably as I think I can within limitations of still needing to function and living in a densely populated urban environment"* (F, 30-35).

*- "the biggest thing I haven't addressed is air travel"* (M, 24-29).

*"To eat less meat, support local farmers and local produce, and reduce the amount of packaging we use"* (M, 30-25).

Some respondents took a negative view of the terminology of sustainability - "I don't believe in the value of the term 'sustainable'. It is meaningless" (M, 24-29). While the term sustainable consumption

encourages young people to think broadly and include consumer activism, reduced consumption and considered consumption, the term was also subject to criticism for lacking meaning. The respondents in this survey had a good comprehension of sustainability and its meaning, but the lifestyles approach to sustainable consumption should be made clearer. A lifestyle-focused approach to communicating sustainable action could result in more significant lifestyle changes at the individual level, where young people are concerned.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the results of this study, the self-perception of young people as diverse is something for policy makers, educators and business to consider. They need to speak to many audiences at once rather than assume young people are all 'good' or all 'apathetic'.

- Given young Australians demonstrated a high level of knowledge and interest in environmentalism and sustainability, policy makers can potentially move beyond the sphere of education and pursue action. As young people expressed a great deal of appreciation for their local communities and a level of willingness to engage in community-driven initiatives, this could be an ideal focus for sustainability intervention.
- To address sustainable consumption at the individual level, government should support strategies that can affect change within the context of young people's lives. Sustainable strategies should build on young people's willingness, through providing sustainable opportunity and real choices.
- While many young people showed they are willing to accept responsibility by individualising the need to take action on sustainability, arguably, action needs to be taken for all levels inclusive of government and action. For example, if government were to take the lead, say in the area of food, they could give financial incentives and support to farmers markets and local suppliers or organic food to make their produce more accessible. Alternatively, they could provide incentives for large-scale supermarkets to pursue these more sustainable products and improve access for consumers
- As young people in this study identified the need for government to take a leading role towards sustainability, the government could publicly disclose (voluntarily) their carbon footprint and how they are taking ways to reduce their impact - e.g. less air travel, more video conferences.

- Amplify the promotion of existing ethical and sustainable consumption food choices given that young consumers have demonstrated an interest in this area of consumption.
- Given the strong disapproval of the public transport system and its popularity despite this within Australia, this clearly needs to be a focus for policy.
- Many respondents commented on the scenarios such as car and bike sharing that similar models are up and running in their local area. Perhaps government bodies can provide support to these organisations that are actively addressing the key issues. Following this, it is important to make it easier for these sustainable organisations to run within the current economic framework through constructing incentives for ideas to come into practice (e.g. grants, tax subsidies etc).

### Suggestions for further research

- Conduct a wider survey about how young people recognise and define sustainability within the context of their lifestyles. While young people understand the principles of sustainability, it seems to limit their imagination rather than liberate it. Test a range of alternative definitions and terms that capture the key principles of sustainability (and relating to the social, economic as well as the ecological dimensions) with the view to find preferably terms for communicating with and engaging young people. For example, perhaps describing an opportunity to reinvent the world will trigger more innovative ideas and action rather than focusing on a fight against climate change or a promoting an environmentalist angle.
- Further investigation to understand the motivations that make some young people assume responsibility for contributing to a sustainable future and why others delegate the problem to government or others. Perhaps learning from those who assume responsibility will inform how to engage those who believe it to be 'someone else's problem'.

## CONCLUSION

Young people are informed and interested in aspects of sustainable living, especially in the areas of food and mobility. They are willing to play a role in making changes for a sustainable future but many would like government to take a leading role. This study highlighted some of the key areas for exploration in

terms of young people and their potential to develop more sustainable lifestyles. Given the success of the qualitative inquiries within this study, creating an open study that asks young people for all their ideas and visions about how to create a sustainable future could bring forth great ideas to inspire and inform policy development.

## REFERENCES

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006-7 Report about young people's living habits
- Bentley, Fien and Neil (2004), NYARS Report; Young Australians as Agents of Change
- Crawford, Kate (2006), Adult Themes; Rewriting the Rules of Adulthood, Macmillian Pty Ltd, Australia
- Denniss, Richard (2005), The Attitudes of Young People to the Environment, Australian Institute Webpaper May 2005
- Heath, Ryan (2005), Please F\* off, it's our turn now, Pluto Press, Australia
- Hobson, Kersty (2003), Consumption, Environmental Sustainability and Human Geography in Australia: A Missing Research Agenda? Australian Geographical Studies, July, p 148-155

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian GSSL research partners are a cross-disciplinary team of three with expertise in the social sciences, business and sustainability studies. Juliette Anich, (MA Business and Marketing) specialises in ethical consumption, Katelyn Samson is undertaking the final stage of her PhD researching social learning as an approach to managing water at the catchment scale in Australia and Katherine Luckins is also completing her PhD researching how young people in Australia are adopting more sustainable habits and living better with less.



# Behavioural changes in Brazil and information needs

Brazil: 1,000 participants

Akatu Institute

**Akatu Institute for Conscious Consumption**<sup>6</sup>, a non-governmental organization, had the privilege of being invited by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** to coordinate the implementation of the *Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles*<sup>7</sup> in Brazil. The common factor between the concept of sustainable lifestyles and the mission of Akatu Institute is the force of conscious consumption for the sustainability of life on the planet. The conscious consumer is someone who analyzes the impacts of his or her consumer choices, seeking balance between his or her own, society's and the planet's needs. At the same time, the conscious consumer endeavours to mobilize other people to do the same. At this point, it may be inferred that conscious consumption is a natural outcome of the transformation of lifestyles in a more sustainable direction.

Brazil is a country with continental proportions covering 8.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and occupying 40% of Latin American territory. The population of over 194 million inhabitants is essentially urban (86.1%), and has the following age classification: 15.2% in the 18-24 age group, 9.0% in the 25-29 age group and 8.5% in the 30-34 age group to total 58 million young people between 18 and 35 years old. The following figures show the Brazilian socioeconomic profile: 67.8% over 15 years old are economically active; the human development index is 0.813; and the gross domestic product is US\$ 1,481.55 billion.

## COLLECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES IN BRAZIL AND RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Akatu Institute immediately realized the importance and potential of the study, and proposed that UNEP broaden the application of the survey questionnaire to 1,000 interviews in the main metropolitan regions and throughout Brazil in order to obtain statistically appropriate results. Questionnaires were collected in

nine metropolitan regions and the Federal District, which allows a nationwide interpretation of data, with possible conclusions for the entire Brazilian population in this age group and urban dwellers. In 2001 Akatu Institute in partnership with UNEP/UNESCO, undertook a survey with Brazilian young people in the 18-24 age group. As the age groups in the two surveys were not exactly the same, we compared the results of both studies considering the 18-35 age group. Therefore, some questions asked in the early 2001 survey were reproduced in the current survey and it was possible to see in the space of almost a decade, how certain topics developed.

A majority of respondents were young active Brazilians with a mix of education levels and socio-economic situations. The economic profile of all the young adults was as follows: 71% worked, 17% studied, 53% did not study, 11% were unemployed, 54% worked full-time, 17% part-time. About 62% of students worked and 15% were unemployed; 62% of young professionals had a job and 16% were unemployed.

## LIFE SATISFACTION AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Brazilian young people say they are pretty happy. On a zero to 10 scale, more than three quarters of the interviewees gave seven or more ratings to their life satisfaction, which shows that young adults are very satisfied with their everyday lives, probably revealing the Brazilian cultural feature of optimism and *joie de vivre*. The assessment of the interviewees on their neighbourhoods showed that 72% agreed that where they lived is "a friendly and pleasant place to live in". However, 45% disagreed with the statement that "most people trust one another." These answers reveal that young adults perceived their dwelling place more positively in terms of socialisation than in terms of trust, union and solidarity with the neighbours. Probably, since the metropolitan areas are extremely violent, this forces people to stay at home and not socialise with others in the neighbourhood. Paradoxically, respondents' statements on what they liked most in neighbourhood life referred mostly to rela-

<sup>6</sup> Akatu, Rua Padre João Manuel, 40 2ª sobreloja Conjunto Nacional (entrada Uniclass) // 01411-000 São Paulo SP Brasil T. 55 11 3141 0177 F. 55 11 3141 0208 // www.akatu.org.br // akatu@akatu.org.br

<sup>7</sup> Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/taskforces/global-survey-on-sustainable-lifestyles.htm>

tionships (54%) and neighbours' behaviours (23%). It may be presumed that, even when there is no trust, union and solidarity in the neighbourhood, the community life that young people lead is satisfactory. This show of satisfaction with life may be related to the willingness of young adults to change to sustainable lifestyles, which would be demonstrated by the acceptance of more sustainable scenarios proposed in the basic needs of home, food and transportation.. Initiatives for sustainable lifestyles could build on this potential, provided that young people's participation and involvement in community life is enhanced and fostered: the GSSL results show average to little integration in the local community among them. Concerning community participation, 65% of the respondents said they did not participate in any organization but 29% participated in a religious institution.

### A LONG WAY TO SUSTAINABILITY?

The young adults who participated in the survey rated global priorities as follows: combat crime, prevent conflicts (32%); reduce or eradicate poverty, the gap between rich and poor (27%); improve economic conditions (18%) and fight environmental degradation and pollution (11%). Although the economic and security questions appeared as priorities, which makes sense considering the uncertainties associated with such topics in a developing country, especially in metropolitan regions where the survey was carried out, it may be considered that the priority given by the young to environmental issues is significant within the national agenda.

In general, young peoples' perception of the major challenges in 2009 continued to adopt a pattern very close to that of 2001. The intensity with which one of the questions was mentioned increased in all items, but the pollution issues – up from 60% to 72% -, health – from 66% to 72% and unemployment – up 63% to 60% -, are still youth's main issues. Nevertheless, on the question of climate change, it is found that in 2001, 24% showed considerable concern with the topic, which was, at the time, less intense. In 2009, however, 61% of the young people mentioned climate change as their major concern, an increase, therefore, of 37%. Moreover, another topic that has had a significant 12% increase was the challenge of reducing pollution, which rose from 60% to 72% among the young. Therefore, these data point to another major issue discussed herein. The environmental concerns, which in 2001 were still relatively small, have not reached much more significant levels in 2009. This demonstrates that the

young population has become much more aware of this question, now perceived as one of the key topics to be faced by society.

Interviewees were generally uninformed or unaware about environmental issues, confirming some results of the survey analysis, to be shown later in this paper, especially when addressing spontaneous perceptions and opportunities for improvements towards sustainability. Concerning local improvements for example, only very few interviewees referred to environmental criteria: 1% said people should not throw waste in the streets, 0.5% they should talk to each other about problem solving or that there should be more social equality.

Among the main themes of the survey, mobility, food and housekeeping, the most frequent mention on the road to sustainability appeared with discussion on food, in both current perceptions and expectations for improvement. Considering the answers, we presume that purchasing food could stand as a starting point to accomplish sustainable everyday life. Even though in a lesser extent, sustainability was also mentioned in the area of mobility and more particularly with regards to potential improvements. In domestic activities or housekeeping, no mention was made of topics relating to sustainability.

Respondents described their daily lives in terms of mobility, food and housekeeping. Akatu also conducted a further analysis of their answers based on socio-demographic profiles:

- **Mobility:** most interviewees said they take the bus (64%) or travel by car (19%) as means of transport. Other minority alternatives were going on foot (10%) and by bike (8%). Traffic jams were negatively mentioned by 17% of the respondents. In addition, bus and car were the most common means of transport used in the cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants. However going on foot, by bike and motorbike were more frequent in smaller towns. This could be a consequence of the greater geographic distances in metropolitan areas, which do not permit a choice of more sustainable options such as walking and biking.
- **Food:** most interviewees buy their food at the supermarket (57%) and local market (7%) as points of purchase, mainly looking for good price and special offers (48%) or specific products (37%). As a criterion for purchasing food, checking the origin of the produce, looking for natural products, preferring produce with a seal and

products that come directly from the producer, were spontaneously perceived attributes of sustainability but represented a very small minority of respondents (1% of the answers). Making food was a more present activity in the everyday life of the female gender as a cultural characteristic of Brazilian way of housekeeping.

- Housekeeping: activities at home most often mentioned were watching TV (69%), preparing food (11%), resting and sleeping (11%) and using the computer (9%). In housekeeping, the only spontaneous perception in some way relating to sustainability was gardening and represented a very small minority of respondents (0.5%). Interestingly, computers were more frequently used in larger towns and cities, and listening to music more often in the towns with less than 250,000 inhabitants, where the computer is not widely spread yet. The mention of "gardening", corresponding to the sustainability attribute in housekeeping was made in towns with a population of 50,000 or less, where gardens are more common.

*"In my grandparents' time it was much calmer, their work was not stressful and they didn't have traffic jams, they planted their own food and had plenty. Today I get stressed out in the traffic and have to work to buy my own food" (M, 18-23).*

Environment-related questions, more specifically nature, arose almost exclusively in the food category, in which there seemed to be a concern to find the best for themselves and their family. In mobility, mention of going on foot and by bike indicated the willingness of the respondents to use more sustainable alternatives, minimising pollution and traffic jams. Also worth considering is that going on foot and by bike may have been considered mobility alternatives with regard to the negative assessment of public transport by 35% of the respondents.

As an expected improvement, the topic of sustainability was spontaneously mentioned by very few interviewees: less than 1% in the context of mobility and food. In both cases, respondents seemed to attribute the responsibility of sustainability actions to third parties.

## YOUTH ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Young people in Brazil seem to be very much focused on socio-economic progress and opportunities but also look at quality of life. When asked to compare their everyday life with the one their grandparents had at

the same age, correspondents are divided between:

- Past positives: quality of life (27%), safety (27%), food (7%) and social relations (6%); and
- Past negatives: work (23%), financial conditions (10%), quality of life (10%), infrastructure (6%).

In towns with under 50,000 inhabitants, 40% of the respondents said that work was worse in the past. We can presume two reasons for that: nowadays there are better opportunities in these small cities or there are more chances to find work in metropolitan areas, due to easier internal migration. From the points above, it is perceived that current everyday life brings more job opportunities, better financial conditions and infrastructure. The negative points of the present were safety, food and social relations. Safety and social relations seem to more strongly characterize negative realities of life in large cities.

Mentions related to sustainability aspects in relation to their grandparents' everyday life, considered from the viewpoint of current everyday life, show the perception of young adults that there is today not such a close relationship with nature, less healthy food and more pollution in general.

Concerning the expectations in ten years' time, the interviewees mentioned:

- Positive aspects – better professional conditions (31%), better family (25%) and personal (21%) conditions, better quality of life (8%), asset procurement (10%); and
- Negative aspects – worse jobs (6%), worse violence (8%), poorer quality of life (8%).

In this set of answers, there is a more positive than negative view, with emphasis on the attribute "quality of life", which appeared as both a positive and negative aspect in similar proportions. Professional and working conditions were also mentioned in both aspects, but with a significantly more positive than negative trend. **It is interesting to also point out that those who attributed a lower value when assessing their satisfaction in life, aspired for a better job.**

On the other hand, with regard to sustainability attributes, the expectation was more negative (worse environment – 4%, degraded environment – 1%, water shortage – 0.4%, more global warming – 0.4%, more poverty and social inequalities – 0.4%) than positive (fewer risks of global warming – 0.5%, flood problems will be solved – 0.1%, people will be more environmentally-aware – 0.1%).

Regarding their ideal way of life, respondents mentioned professional aspects (more job opportunities - 33%) and personal aspects (health, peace, quality of life and honesty, for example - 28%). Financial stability (24%), good family conditions (17%) and good living conditions (14%) were also considered ideal situations by the respondents. Attributes of sustainability, in this idealised environment, had a 9.5% mention and involved: social equality – each one doing his or her part to help the poor – and other aspects: no corruption, equal wages, non-polluted environment, no deforestation, pure air and no traffic.

The analysis also helps identify that:

- In the small towns with less than 250,000 people, a higher percentage (8%) valued social equality as part of the ideal way of life;
- Also in small towns more people (9%) considered that the ideal was unpolluted environment;
- In the group of those who gave a higher rating to quality of life – ratings nine or ten on a zero to ten scale – a higher percentage (6%) of people considered social equality as part of the ideal way of life;
- But people who gave a lower rating to the aspect quality of life, from zero to five on a zero to ten scale, considered professional aspects more important in the ideal way of life.
- The interviewees expressed in their desires regarding sustainability attributes, concern for equality (4.4%), less pollution (3%) and the collective (1%).

The perceptions and expectations spontaneously stated by the interviewees in relation to their daily life did not emphasize the questions of sustainability. This fact can be verified when comparing more general mentions quantitatively with those of sustainability attributes, the latter always being in a smaller proportion. The respondents showed a more individualistic trend in relation to the practices of sustainability, namely, they hope for personal benefits and that actions are taken by goods and service providers and not by themselves.

In the set of answers on the relationship of young adults towards sustainability, it is found that there is little information on the subject, which implies that it is important to address the topic among this population. Watching TV is an important form of domestic leisure, which leads to inferring that young adults tend to obtain information passively and that the television media could be a way of "going into each home" for topics involving sustainability.

## SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION

From the set of scenarios presented,<sup>8</sup> the interviewees understood that the following potential benefits do exist, which suggest opportunities in innovation for sustainable lifestyles:

### Mobility

A majority of respondents (53%) selected the Bicycle Centre scenario as their favourite one in the field of mobility. In both scenarios however, environmental, economic and traffic questions were stressed, which suggests that young people perceive the two scenarios as offering the same benefits for sustainability.

1. Although there was no indication of sustainability in spontaneous descriptions of everyday life, respondents understood very well sustainability benefits of the mobility scenarios.
2. However, the questions that required better everyday life before the interviewee learned about the scenarios (such as pollution, need for people to use public transport to avoid traffic jams, environmental preservation and the importance of less heavy vehicle pollution) were coherent with the answers on the benefits and attributes of sustainability when the interviewees were told about the Mobility scenarios.

### Food

The Urban Gardens scenario was preferred by 52% of the respondents, therefore indicating an equal division of the public between both scenarios. In both scenarios, questions of quality of the product, health and environment were emphasized, namely waste, which suggests that both scenarios could offer the same benefits from the sustainability viewpoint.

1. Spontaneous perceptions of sustainability before knowing the scenarios are coherent with the comments on such scenarios, especially with regard to cultivating their own food for subsistence, a situation directly relating to Urban Gardens; and also verifying the origin of the product, seeking natural products and products directly from the producer, situations related to Vegetable Bag Subscription.
2. Indications of questions to be improved before the young learn of the scenarios, such as services, prices and purchase agglomerations, also suggest a demand for more individualized relations of buying

<sup>8</sup> Bicycle center, Car sharing, Urban gardens, Vegetable bag subscription, Urban composting, Family take away



and selling, which would bring benefits in food buying, with better quality products, better price and more comfort for providing basic food products.

### Housekeeping

Respondents' preference was much stronger in the field of housekeeping. The Urban Composting scenario was preferred by 78% of them. Unlike mobility and food, in which there was no difference of preference between the scenarios, Collective Laundry was the least chosen scenario. The following were two of the potential benefits recognized as sustainable in the Urban Composting scenario: environmental preservation (37%) and recycling (21%). When the above data is compared with the data on sustainability in everyday perception before the young adults learn of the scenarios, it is found that there is in the contact with the scenarios the perception of the sustainability attributes within the domestic environment, especially with regard to recycling waste.

Among all the topics – mobility, food and housekeeping – the most promising scenario as an opportunity for innovation is Urban Composting, which is categorized as Quality-Oriented. It should be recalled that the Bicycle Centre and Urban Gardens are also scenarios and that both are in the Quality-Oriented Systems category. Young adults expressed the following motivations in the group of favourite scenarios:

- Mobility - Bicycle Centre: environmental preservation (54%), leisure and a comfortable life (33%), improving traffic (28%), economy (20%);
- Mobility – Car-Sharing: environmental preservation (36%), improving traffic (32%), practicality (28%), comfort (27%), economy (22%);
- Food – Urban Gardens: learning to cultivate their own food (70%), healthy and better quality food (35%), urban benefits (15%), quality of life (14%);
- Food – Vegetable Bag Subscription: practicality (45%), healthy and better quality food (36%), prevent waste (13%), eating fresh food (8%), economy (8%);
- Housekeeping – Urban Composting: recycling (82%), environmental preservation (12%).

**It is understood that the aforementioned motivations can be organized in the following categories, in order to transform lifestyles in a more sustainable direction: (a) environmental preservation, (b) quality of life, (c) economy, (d) quality food, (e) improved traffic and (f) less waste. These six categories cover the more general attributes, such as environmental preservation and**

**quality of life, and more specific attributes, such as improved traffic and less waste.**

The indication of structure requirements and players for innovation in sustainability shows that the young adults expect benefits through third-party actions – goods and service providers. When asked to name the most relevant actors to be mobilized and develop initiatives such as the sustainable scenarios presented in the survey, respondents mostly mention public authorities and, in a lesser extent, companies.

- Mobility – Bicycle Centre: government (77%), companies (14%), population (11%), neighbourhood associations (10%);
- Mobility – Car-Sharing: government (64%), companies (24%), population (10%), neighbourhood associations (8%);
- Food – Urban Gardens: government (69%), population (22%), neighbourhood associations (18%), companies (5%);
- Food – Vegetable Bag Subscription: government (63%), companies (14%), neighbourhood associations (11%), population (10%);
- Housekeeping – Urban Composting: government (82%), population (15%), neighbourhood associations (15%), companies (7%).

From the socio-economic profile of young adults, it is found that:

- The hierarchy of family expenditure was concentrated on food and drink, therefore the Urban Gardens and Vegetable Bag Subscription would be a possible means of lowering the price of basic food produce. For 60% of professionals and 50% of students the first item in family expenditure was food and drink.
- A high percentage of respondents worked and earned a wage as source of income, and so the Bicycle Centre and Car-Sharing could also be regarded as a means of lowering mobility costs; and
- From the predominant characteristic of homes being houses and traditional family structures, Urban Composting could be widely practiced by families in their home environments.

It is inferred that these scenarios, if considered potential enterprises, could reflect a community life expectancy with more quality. It would be possible, within small geographic areas and involving a limited number of people per enterprise, to form a sustainable micro-region. These would be a step-by-step process to

organize the neighbourhood towards sustainable goals and the possibility to strengthen the relationships.

The scenario rejected by the participants in the survey was Collective Laundry, which is explained for the following reasons: no interest in sharing with others (21%), may cause confusion and quarrels (18%), increase in water and energy costs (12%), they were not convinced of the benefits (12%), would not like to do their washing with strangers (11%), it would not be hygienic to mix their own and others' clothes (5%), clothes must be washed individually at home (5%) and they did not want to go out to wash their clothes (4%). This scenario, significantly rejected by the young adults compared to the other five scenarios presented, is clearly the most evident, and revealed the privacy of people's home life.

## INFORMATION NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

After being encouraged by a text on climate change, young adults revealed they did not have enough information about environmental challenges and climate change. Although a majority of them said they were ready to take action toward sustainability - saving water, energy, food, etc. (37%), recycling (23%), preserving the environment (13%), fruit and vegetable growing (13%), eating good food (5%), reducing car use (5%) – 21% said they did not know how to make their life more sustainable. Considering this, we meet the possibility to develop actions in two axes: communication and education, both aiming to teach individuals how to become conscious consumers and also how they can teach others about sustainable lifestyles.

In addition, 78% of the interviewees said that being informed about climate change would generate behavioural changes and more participation. Individuals have a role to play in this process: people should be more conscious about environment (45%), people should disseminate information on the topic (35%), people should be taught how to look after the environment (10%), this information would bring more benefits for the population, traffic, environment, and so on (8%), the environment has been harmed (4%). The negative comment in fact shows that people do not want to change their attitudes (7%).

Based on these observations, respondents' information needs concerned the following topics:

- Environmental preservation (55%) – on the choices not to destroy the environment, how to

save energy to preserve the planet, how more people can use bicycles to reduce pollution;

- Environmental awareness (14%) – on separating waste for recycling and guidelines on joint/ community work.

When asked about what made a way of life sustainable, the interviewees referred to the following: saving water, energy, food, and so on (17%), environmental awareness (14%), having a job (11%), producing own food (10%), recycling (8%), eliminating pollution (7%) and people's attitude (5%).

Comparing what the interviewees considered important to make life more sustainable with the actions that they would be ready to take, it is found that: (a) they are willing to save water, energy, food, since the frequency of answers increased from 17% to 37%; and (b) they would also be willing to recycle, the frequency of answers increasing from 8% to 23%, coherent with characteristics of the Urban Composting scenario.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

At the beginning of the questionnaire, young people did not seem to consider behavioural changes for sustainable lifestyles as a priority behavioural change. But as the questionnaire progressed, they became more involved in the theme, did not reject the scenarios, and showed interest in having more information on the subject - a sign that they are open to the proposed possibilities and to a further involvement towards a more sustainable lifestyle. However, it is worth mentioning the need to inform young people about "how to act" so that, taking advantage of their being open to information changes in behaviour may in fact occur.

*"A sustainable lifestyle is being able to support yourself without aggression against nature and humanity" (M, 30-35).*

*"Each of us has to bring to the forefront our share in contributing to stop environmental pollution" (F, 24-29).*

*"People should be better informed about global warming to be conscious of how our habits cause impact on nature, for example, acquiring a new habit of buying food produced near home" (F, 24-29).*

*"I would change what humans think about environmental preservation; if man has respect for nature he has respect for himself" (M, 24-29).*

# Hotel Mamma

## Changing the living “chip”

Colombia: 301 participants

Prepared by Andrea Mendoza, Professor, Universidad de Los Andes., Colombia.

### FOREWORD

This report has been customized to fulfil the common language that is being built among GSSL partners in terms of information and to share the particularities that, from the design perspective, can be brought to nurture the discussion regarding sustainable lifestyles. That is why the report basically tries to contextualize the reader with the issues that, from the design world, could be inferred from the respondents' answers; this giving also account of what, in terms of design, has been done along the way.

### COUNTRY MAIN FEATURES

Colombia is the fourth-largest country in South America. Its capital is Bogotá. It is the third-most populated country in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico. Thirty cities have a population of 100,000 or more. Major cities include Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena. Ethnic diversity in Colombia is a result of the intermingling of indigenous people, Europeans and Africans. Today, only about 1% of the people can be identified as fully indigenous on the basis of language and customs.

The national language of Colombia is Spanish. It is estimated that about 90% of Colombians are Roman Catholic. Colombia is an ethnically diverse country, made up of Mestizo (58%), white (20%), Mulatto (14%), black (4%), mixed black-Amerindian (3%) and Amerindian (1%). With an annual growth rate of 2.5% as of 2008, Colombia's natural resources include coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, nickel, gold, silver, copper, platinum and emeralds. Colombia exports everything from petroleum, coffee, coal, and nickel to emeralds, apparel, bananas and cut flowers to its major markets in the United States, Venezuela, Ecuador, Switzerland, Peru and Chile. Colombia imports machinery/equipment, grains, chemicals, transportation equipment, mineral products, consumer products, metals/metal products, plastic/rubber, paper products, aircraft, oil and gas industry equipment, supplies, chemicals, electricity from its major suppliers including the United States, China, Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela.

### GSSL: THE MILIEU

The GSSL survey was mainly distributed in Bogotá and Medellín among a population of students belonging to the upper-middle classes. The “milieu” in which the survey was held in Bogotá was quite particular. It was triggered by the Design department (Faculty of Design and Architecture) at Los Andes University in Bogotá where a significant change was taking place as the faculty was moving from Industrial Design to a broader arena: Design. Furthermore, the faculty was engaging in the Design network for Social Innovation and Sustainability ([www.Desis-network.org](http://www.Desis-network.org)) and a semester-long workshop on sustainability (named Estudio 7 Sostenibilidad) was also starting. So the “green” topic was quite in the air for students. In that regard, the main goal of the survey was to “pierce” students' behaviours not only looking towards their professional life but also here and now and their daily life as citizens of the world. Many of them were not conscious, at all, of the relevance of the topic, which, upon completion of the questionnaire, made them not only aware of the “issue” but also of the possibilities to organize themselves (challenges, choices, decisions).

During this process we detected small but relevant issues such as:

- Youngsters don't just need to take informed decisions, but willing decisions
- Sustainable behaviours can be prompted not only by information but also by means of understanding
- Sustainability, in order to be accomplished, does not need to be just publicized but also well explained and thus understood.

The main achievement of the GSSL initiative was to have them “reflecting” for almost the first time in their “industrial” career (since they were coming from six semesters of Industrial Design leapfrogging to just Design) about their lifestyles and implications, which later became a platform for dialogue and for projecting their assignments.

The keywords that could be drawn from their responses, when talking about what is needed to reach a more sustainable future, were: responsibility, commitment and dedication but against these words there were those that they experience on an everyday basis: comfort, laziness and a rejection to all that could entail sacrifice.

Sustainability did not appear as a spontaneous state, but was perceived as a status of "improvement" given the strong accent that mass media is giving to it, making the "green issue" appear as "trendy".

In Medellín, the survey was conducted in different private universities including Pontificia Universidad Bolivariana, EAFIT, ASAB (Academia Superior de Bellas Artes –Arts College) and Universidad San Buenaventura, thanks to professors such as Ana Isabel Palacios. There, the sample of students belonged to upper/middle classes as well. Students from other universities participated spontaneously such as the Jorge Tadeo Lozano and Piloto University from Bogotá. Some individual respondents from organizations such as FENALCO (National Federation of Trade) and various NGOs employees also participated.

## SCENARIOS IN SHORT

The most successful "topic" of the survey was FOOD encompassing all its scenarios.

### Food

Colombian food comprises of a meat based diet, so respondents found the possibilities related to vegetarianism, vegetable shops and organic consumption interesting, but would simply not adopt these ways. The different and very creative alternatives shown to them were appealing, but from attraction to action, there is a gap.

The veggie subscription option was interesting to them given that they don't have experience in dealing with vegetables. Growing food was strongly related to moments of leisure and to some extent, it binds them to farming practices and in some cases to their grandparents, for those who used to live in the country side. Home delivery was attractive in terms of having an expert advising them on what to eat so that they can have a more balanced diet. Urban Gardens were considered extremely appealing, trendy (tuned to what's happening nowadays in Los Angeles, New York or Japan) but for our context they considered it a utopia.

## Most Visible Results

According to our respondents, in a perfect world, they would like to:

- live in peace and security
- live in a healthy environment
- be close to nature
- use less time to commute
- consume local products
- grow veggies
- live at a slow pace
- create their own opportunities
- transform their world
- be in touch with LIFE (according to them: "even with the tiniest microorganisms")

Respondents would not like to:

- live through a war
- live in exile
- lose their dignity
- not be able to use their creativity
- lose their freedom
- be an addict
- depending on someone
- access to education and health

Besides answering the GSSL questionnaire, our respondents addressed questions such as:

- Are cities the right place to grow food?
- Who would be in charge of the urban gardens?
- Could urban gardens solve starvation for other layers of society?
- What if upper classes grow food for the poorest – displaced – ones?

### Mobility

*"I like my car a lot, I love driving, I love the comfort and security of one's own transport" (M, 18-25).*

Biking is really a goal in the youth's imagination but issues such as safety and long distances in Bogotá and Medellín are a hindrance. With regards to car sharing and car pooling, there are remarkable initiatives and they would be keen to follow them, but again, the issue of security appears, plus a certain sense of "selfishness" expressed by respondents.

With regards to the car sharing and car pooling scenarios, students expressed that even though there is a lot of advertising and efforts to spread sustainable ideas, it is difficult for them to implement these ideas



as people are not keen to share, even if it means reducing gas costs etc. People do not share what gives them comfort and, again, the security issue appears as a hindrance.

### Housekeeping

*"I'm usually studying at my desk using the computer. Sometimes, especially during meals I watch TV. Sometimes I use the gas stove to prepare my own food, and during the weekend I do the dishes. Lately I have talked a bit less on the mobile phone. At the university I use the microwave to re-heat my food and also at home when necessary" (M, 18-25).*

The average Colombian could easily live at their parents' home (usually known as Hotel Mamma), until their forties, so all the issues related to housekeeping (laundry, dishes, ironing, cleaning, etc.) are almost unknown to them. In fact, this applies to the other scenarios where for instance respondents answered about food, but usually they have their food bought to them and prepared without effort by someone else at home, the mother or a maid of service. In the mobility case, they use one of the available cars at home (parents' cars).

Respondents' BASIC priority list for a simple life...

- to have access to a shower
- to have a clean place where to sleep
- to have access to basic food
- to get to know God

The only real concern in this scenario was related to energy. Indeed, many expressed their willingness to start using energy-efficient bulbs and to start regulating the consumption of energy of their various appliances.

### LOOKING BEYOND

What we have been doing in Colombia, also inspired by the GSSL survey.

*"We need to establish a new framework of priorities" (M, 18-25).*

To a certain extent, scenarios presented in the survey appeared dull to our respondents. Somehow, even if "being green" appeared as trendy, in their comments, it was noticed that the issue and modification of lifestyles could be heavy and "boring." Starting from there, at the University, we have been making hypothesis on what could be set into motion so that our students in particular can approach the issue at

deeper levels in their everyday lives and so shape more sustainable lifestyles. For this, we came near the world of Public Design (very related to the worlds of art and architecture).

With this in mind, we have tried to redefine what sustainability is, putting it closer to definitions of "happiness" which, for almost a decade now, has also been a topic of measurement and inquiries.<sup>9</sup> We won't enter into argumentation of this branch that binds sustainability to the city and public design, but there is a lot of work that can be done at this level when talking about improving quality of life in cities, how public spaces are perceived, city re-appropriation, and something that is relevant for youngsters to have: fun.



**3 Photos:** a.b. Esterni intervention in Milan. A proposal to provide passersby with a space to rest in the middle of the hastiness of cities. Even a pillow fight (c. Varsovia) can give account of the need of citizens to share awe moments with their fellows and express themselves using the city. Pictures by Andrea Mendoza.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/aug2008/gb20080820\\_874593.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/aug2008/gb20080820_874593.htm)

Examples of initiatives moving in this direction are available on the following websites:

- [www.esterni.org.it](http://www.esterni.org.it) (see 3 photos above)
- [www.improveeverywhere.com](http://www.improveeverywhere.com)
- <http://www.thefuntheory.com/>

In line with these fun initiatives, we “challenged” our students to face themselves with the limits of the world, by setting an exercise called Radical<sup>10</sup> (see 3 Images below) For one semester, students had to opt for taking shorter showers, using public transport, not eating junk food, diminishing their dependence on electric devices and so forth. At the end of the semester, small but steady changes started to emerge as students affirmed that from that moment on, they will change their behaviours, clearly showing how the exercise started to spark new challenges for them in the immediate future. Some of the students started to bring home-cooked food to the university instead of buying junk food, and others have expressed having also diminished their smoking habits.

Later on, this exercise was applied to other courses, even to small one-week workshops where participants felt that having the Radical as a parallel exercise allows them to live, first hand, the effects of small changes in daily life, compared to the pure academic projects that they have to develop on their professional lives.

In parallel to this, thanks to our participation in the DESIS network, (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability led by Italian Professor Ezio Manzini) students have started sharing their visions of a sustainable world with their peers in other latitudes. This allows them not to feel isolated in ‘improving the world,’ but rather to feel like they are part of an active community with similar interests,

*There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth.  
We are all crew. - Marshall McLuhan, 1965*

Finally, it cannot be said that our students and youngsters in general love their mothers more than the rest of respondents in the world (as said, food, family and fun are key for our young population). But according to the responses collected, it can be said that they are looking for ways to keep that love independent from their personal interests, aspirations and dreams, elements that given the conservative ways of Colombian society, are not well understood by the average family. But times are changing and youngsters who are witnessing the pace of other young persons in other parts of the world (this also thanks to the development of ICTs) have started to strive for more independence. And this means changing their mind-settings, their mental “chip”, and thus caring more about the environment, which in all cases is a unique “cosmic-hotel”: Planet Mother Earth.

*“A new understanding of what quality of life is needs to be developed” (F, 18-25).*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Politicians could be a great example of change and decision making with their “daily” lives, something near to what Al Gore and his media management has done.
- Platforms such as facebook, twitter, flickr are taking the world, therefore it is extremely important to plan and keep updated a strategy based in those means.
- Giving visibility to the Small, Local, Open and Connected scenarios SLOC (in the words of Professor Ezio Manzini) are key when trying to implement down to earth activities.
- Cinema: it would be important to prompt, support, fund and co-produce “new” ways to pierce and approach youngsters thinking by means of films and art. A “passive” but extremely effective way to make them “think” and bring a new mental “chip” in their minds.



<sup>10</sup> The Radical exercise has been quite successful and results can be seen on Youtube under atmenO21 and susradical channels: <http://www.youtube.com/user/susRADICAL#p/u/2/DzeamWx-hMk> also: <http://www.youtube.com/user/atmenO21#p/u/4/raAHBwKLL-s>

**3 Images.** Eliana Zuluaga and her video for the Radical exercise showing her breakfast transformation along a semester. This video and related ones can be found in YouTube under key words/channels: atmenO21, susradical and soysostenible.

- It is mandatory to improve security and comfort in big cities
- A regulation of what is shown on TV is needed
- For what regards "eco-consciousness", thanks to mass-media, youngsters are more aware than their grandparents of the environment. So, if grandparents did care about it in the past, possibly, it was more related to a "simple" love towards nature or related to religion. It would be important to review these "basic" words: love and religion.

## ON-LINE REFERENCES

- [www.desis-network.org](http://www.desis-network.org)
- [http://www.dane.gov.co/daneweb\\_V09/](http://www.dane.gov.co/daneweb_V09/)
- [www.esterni.org.it](http://www.esterni.org.it)
- [www.improveeverywhere.com](http://www.improveeverywhere.com)
- <http://www.thefuntheory.com/>
- <http://www.publicdesignfestival.org>
- <http://festival.humancities.eu>
- <http://attainable-utopias.org>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go to Natalia Agudelo, Freddy Zapata (design dpt. Los Andes University) and all the students involved in the survey.



# Urban Sustainable Lifestyle: A perspective of Young Egyptians

Egypt: 275 participants

Ahmed Hamza, Prof. of Environmental Health, Alexandria University, Egypt

## BACKGROUND

Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East and the second-most populous on the African continent. The country has a predominately young population with about 83 million people living in five major regions, namely, Cairo; Alexandria; Upper Egypt along the banks of the Nile; the Nile delta, which fans out north of Cairo; and along the Suez Canal. These regions are among the world's most densely populated, containing an average of over 3,800 persons per square mile. The annual increase in population currently exceeds one million and the number of people reaching working age and entering the labor market each year is enormous. The challenge of generating new jobs is therefore formidable. Population growth coupled with limited arable land and dependence on fixed quota of Nile water continue to overtax resources and stress Egyptian society. According to the Human Development Report of 2007, the HDI of Egypt was 0.703, life expectancy at birth 69.9 years, adults literacy rate 76.4 percent and GDP per capita \$5349 US.

Egypt is at a stage of demographic transition characterized by a pronounced youth bulge. According to the census of 2006, 33.5% of Egyptian population was young adults between the ages of 18 and 35, of which 47% have high school degrees and 13.1% have graduate degrees.

Egypt suffers from acute urban problems. Egyptian cities have grown at a fast pace, surpassing in some cases



eight-fold their original footprint in 1985. The migration of rural work force seeking job opportunities in urban areas fuelled the informal expansion of cities; informal industries have flourished in poor migrant areas and lack of basic urban services has led to environmental degradation. Today, urban informal area residents represent almost 40% of Egypt's urban population. While informal areas have access to educational and health service, many of the slum pockets suffer from high unemployment and safety issues. For women and youth, these problems are profound.

The distribution of the GSSL questionnaires, the collection of answers and the statistical analyses were performed by a group of professors from Alexandria, Cairo and Suez Canal Universities. Over 300 answers were received between June/July 2009 with 275 subjected to analyses. The large amount of data collected offers a general segmentation of respondents' profile. They were almost equal proportions of male and females, with the majority of young adults living with parents in shared apartments in cities due to acute housing problems in urban Egypt. This situation is creating increased anxiety and social problems, particularly among young families living with their relatives.

More than half of the young respondents were less than the age of 30, while about 9% were few months over 35 years and considered within the "heaping range" of statistical analysis. The rate of unemployment among young professionals is fairly high (13.7%). While few youth have the opportunity to decent jobs, financial stability and independence, the majority experience unemployment or low-paying jobs. Work opportunities are interrelated with other dimensions of exclusion of youth including participation in decision making and channels for exercising citizenship. The unexpectedly high percent of salaries paid for employed students (52.8%) is attributed to the large number of graduate students among the sampled individuals who receive regular wages while on a study leave from their work. Major fields of study among respondents are business and economics, engineering, environment, and medicine. Most of the young professionals who are not holding



jobs are housewives not gainfully employed. The respondents' jobs are mainly in education, medicine, engineering, and banking.

*Examples cited by respondents in support of this argument include expansion of private transport in large cities, and less reliance on mass transit due to lack of public financing; motorists and outdoor businesses are given priority over pedestrians; energy and municipal water are subsidized, which encourage intensive greening projects and golf courses in high-class water-scarce communities; waste disposal is financially cheap and behaviorally free, while waste recycling and reuse schemes are lacking. Such actions, in the respondents' views, send wrong signals that penalize social and environmental behavior, and encourage consumerism in urban Egypt.*

Over 60% of students and 80% of young professionals have an acceptable standard of living as they live in pleasant, cooperative and safe neighborhoods. While 20.4% of Egyptian youth are members of sports clubs, 8.4% are engaged in peace and humanitarian activities and 5.6% are involved in environmental and sustainable development projects, with a minor percentage of 2.2 are members of religious groups and notable percentage of 53.8% are not actively involved in any social activity. The average social capital index of 3.99 indicates that Egyptian youth are moderately engaged in community activities, while most of them enjoy moderate to high life satisfaction but not well informed about or engaged in sustainability issues and challenges. It appears from the survey results that lifestyle is shaped by a combination of material capitals (physical, and financial resources), and social and human relations (social networks, family ties, norms and morals). While life satisfaction is mainly correlated with standard of living and financial resources, respondents pointed to unemployment and inflation, deterioration of environmental quality, and weaknesses of social relations as serious factors reflecting on their life satisfaction.

In general, no gender or age differences were detected regarding standard of living and life satisfaction. Significant difference was revealed between sexes regarding the social capital questions (trust with regards to local areas) with preponderance of males at the higher ranks; possible explanation of this result is the problems induced by job discrimination, cultural constraints, and incidences of harassment in public places which cause less engagement of females in social life. The youth global priorities include eradication of poverty combating crime followed by improving economic conditions, fighting

environmental degradation and improving social services, while spreading democracy and fighting gender inequalities receive less attention from the sampled young adults.

## YOUTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Sustainability in everyday life perception

Egyptian youth perceive sustainable lifestyle throughout the environmental consequences of everything they use in their daily life, the food they eat, the homes they live in, and how they move. During face-to-face interviews, which constituted most of the respondents' answers to the questionnaire, a common view expressed of the need to identify and quantify the impacts of household consumption prior to determining whether a shift in consumption patterns contributes to decreasing or increasing these impacts.

*Sustainability in housekeeping, as deduced by the survey team from interviews with respondents, pointed to the need to save energy used for heating, cooling, lighting, food storage and preparation, washing and other functions. To enhance saving of energy and utilities' use in households, respondents proposed instituting necessary measures to encourage use of efficient eco-technologies (renewable energy sources) and materials (low-emission, less toxic and durable products), and expanding schemes for use of recyclable domestic wastes.*

Their typical activities at home range from watching TV to using computers, listening to music, taking a bath or relaxing; they are less interested in spending time with the family, exercising, or doing housework and handy jobs.

The majority of respondents identified the need to rationalize food consumption to fulfill nutritional needs of the growing population within the context of cultural habits, and culinary tastes and preferences of the Egyptian consumers. If the food is prepared at home taste, availability, food price and quality, household-size, and hygienic aspects become important factors for selecting food-products. Eating outside is determined by similar motivations, together with time-availability and financial considerations.

*A statement quoted from a professional interviewee, which does not necessarily reflect the views of the mainstream respondents: "We see encouraging signs of relating sustainability in food consumption to expansion of environment-friendly practices in farming; examples include energy and water saving projects implemented by the Ministry of Irrigation*

*and use of safe agrochemicals advocated by the Ministry of Agriculture. I recently participated in an NGO campaign aimed at enhancing environmental awareness of housewives in the neighborhood and promoting minimization of waste generation in food processing, storage and consumption; the fruits of our efforts are slowly emerging.” (F, 30-35)*

The respondents expressed a preference for taking a bus, a train, or a private car over bicycling or walking to satisfy their mobility needs. They feel that more sustainable mobility patterns can be achieved through a shift to communal transit or from owning a car to using public transport. However, some respondents feel that the car represents more than merely a means of transport as car ownership reflects social status, and a sense of freedom and privacy.

*A quote by an employed respondent “Substantially higher salaries in private business and banking institutions are limited to the connected job seekers, while I was forced, after a long search, to accept a poorly paying part-time job in public services which lack career motivation and does not fit my educational background.” (M, 20-24)*

In the way their everyday life compares to their grandparents, it appears that the Egyptian young adults have the energy, enthusiasm and creativity, coupled with the availability of advanced technologies and communication that seem to enable them to be engaged in new patterns of lifestyle. Using new environmental technologies, running waste recycling programs, and implementing natural resources conservation initiatives are some examples cited by respondents of the emerging interest in environmental issues. The majority of respondents still praise the past rather than the present, despite life amenities and diverse facilities provided by technology advances. They feel that despite the hardships of grandparents’ life, yet they were enjoying safer, more relaxed living conditions with less pollution, better education and public services, and higher moral and religious values.

On the negative side of present life, the respondents identified environmental pollution, crowdedness and lack of employment opportunities as potential causes of difficulties associated with urban living, which are further aggravated by the inadequacy of national socio-economic plans, and the ineffectiveness of the regulatory frameworks and educational systems.

Young people were asked to talk about their hopes and fears for the future. They spoke about their

wish of better future and desire to do well for their children and grandchildren, achieve better standard of living and job opportunities, healthier lifestyle, and improved social relations and morale. They expressed a strong desire to live in safe, quiet, clean and sociable communities, similar to that of older generations. Regarding fears of the future, the respondents expressed concern about spreading poverty, environmental degradation, climate change, resource scarcity, and rising crime rate. Their worst fears are the threats of wars, deprivation of essential life-support systems particularly water and shelter, increased social stresses and absence of entertainment.

As deduced from responses, Egyptian youth lead different lifestyles and have significant differences in the consumption patterns within and between communities depending on where they live, the environment around them, and their education and social values. Consumption behavior has been correlated in the past with the economic status and state of well-being, however, an emerging emphasis is being placed on aspirations, cultural diversity, and personal norms. The survey also reveals that in competitive urban communities of Cairo and Alexandria, self-serving behavior tends to be more dominant than cooperative attitude among young people, while in the less competitive communities such as Suez Canal region cooperative behaviors tend to dominate over selfish ones. It seems that dominance of consumer society in large cities encourages individualism and competition and discourages social behavior.

### Youth Visions and Expectations

The youth expressed concern that rising trends in consumption in Egypt offsets government’s efforts to achieve economic growth. They indicated that changing consumption patterns would be necessary to achieve sustainable development. The respondents overwhelmingly noted that “one-size-fits-all” approach is not suitable to integrate sustainable lifestyle among Egyptian youth.

While the respondents’ recognize the negative impacts of unsustainable urbanization in Egypt, they also feel that the rising rate of unemployment is responsible for the spreading of inappropriate lifestyles among young adults. They noted that the prospects of employment are severely affected by the relatively weak economic performance in Egypt while recent global economic crises brought further decline in youth employment. Respondents also feel that their concerns and needs are not adequately taken

into account in public employment policies, which led to the observed discontent or indifference towards engagement in social life. Sustained economic growth, in their views, will enable achieving a lasting solution to the acute problems of youth unemployment and underemployment; a prerequisite for achieving a sustainable lifestyle.

The young respondents were critical of the attitude of "indifference" among the general public towards environmental protection and resources conservation; they also noted the dominance of noise, impulsiveness and carelessness among young generations. Strengthening youth participation in social life, in their views, requires more efforts to initiate dialogue and to foster their engagement in social activities, and community services.

On the issue of food consumption, respondents expressed dissatisfaction of bad display and packaging of food, absence of control on food prices, extensive use of plastics in wrapping and packaging, and dishonesty among vendors. As gathered from responses, sustainability in food consumption may be achieved through developing new alternative lifestyle scenarios comprising shifting demand toward more resource-efficient foods; encouraging food grown in self-managed schemes with a minimum of harmful agrochemicals and hormones; and minimizing waste generation from food processing and consumption.

*"A sustainable approach employed by a major fast food chain involves replacing Styrofoam by biodegradable potato skins in manufacturing disposable cups and trays." (F, 18-23)*

The World Bank cited traffic congestion, high reliance on road transport, and traffic safety, as key issues facing urban transport in Egypt. Cairo experiences average traffic speed of 10 km/hour, which continues to fall with the increase in the number of cars on the road; a



situation aggravated by licensing three million new cars in Egypt every year. According to a World Bank report, dependence on public transportation is less than 65%.

Respondents pointed to over-crowding, excessive traffic emissions, bad driving habits and unreliable mass-transit systems as main obstacles to use of public transport in cities. To achieve sustainable mobility, respondents pointed to the need for a shift towards more energy and material efficient technologies and practices in the transport sector and improving the capacity of existing infrastructure.

## INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Spontaneous understanding of sustainability scenarios

The respondents have diverse understanding and reaction to the GSSL scenarios. They correlate alternative scenarios with the apparent social and behavioral characteristics of their daily life. In food scenarios the majority preferred urban gardening (slow/individual), while food takeaway (coop) and vegetable bags (quick) were generally unacceptable; among the housekeeping scenarios, the majority preferred energy management (quick/individual) followed by urban composting (slow) while collective laundry (coop) was unacceptable. An exception is noted in the mobility scenarios as car pooling on demand (coop) and car sharing (quick) were preferred over bicycling (slow) for obvious logistical and infrastructural reasons.

*Quoted examples include developing appropriate mass transit modes and limiting expansion of private transport vehicles, supporting integrated management of water, energy and waste in households and promoting self-sufficiency in food production through involvement of individuals, communities, and local farmers in new farming practices and crop varieties, to minimize reliance on water-intensive crops and food imports.*

Concerns raised by respondents favoring use of private cars include losing a sense of ownership and car's emotional attachment in collective endeavors, additional effort for organizing car pooling, and difficulty in accessing pooling service compared to ownership of private cars. However, pooling and sharing cars were favored by environmentally-oriented respondents. No significant differences were revealed between sexes and age groups for the preferred scenarios in the surveyed categories of housekeeping, food and mobility (an exception was the preference



of age group 30-35 for car sharing, probably because they have better opportunity for owning personal cars and having a steady jobs which fit with car sharing schemes compared to the age group 18-25 which preferred car pooling on demand as they have less opportunity to own a car and hold regular job).

*Examples of the negative rebound effect identified by respondents "replacing old cars with a fuel-efficient new model takes advantage of subsidized fuel costs to drive further and more often which subsequently intensify traffic pollution problems, and unfriendly practices of supermarkets that offer extensive plastic and Styrofoam packaging to attract customers but ultimately aggravate garbage disposal problems"*

### Sustainable scenarios and opportunities

Contemporary challenges and innovative approaches identified in interviews with respondents include improving environmental governance, integrating natural resource management into poverty-reduction strategies, and promoting new and adaptable approaches to sustainable lifestyle among young men and women. A significant part of the environmental problems identified by respondents is related to poor management, weak institutional capacity and insufficient expenditure on environment and public service projects. In general, respondents agree that government economic policy should avoid price interventions and subsidies related to water and energy resources, which tend to exacerbate economic and ecological losses, particularly in the energy and agricultural sectors. Such environmental problems not only affect young generation of today, but may impact future generations as well.

*An innovative scenario is cited by a newly married professional: "Instead of investing heavily in inefficient municipal services and bulk infrastructure projects, the government should make use of the tremendous energy of the people, to build new housing projects, operate local systems of service delivery, promote self-governance, and harvest resources available to the local community. Mubarak Youth Housing Project which sells land at nominal price to young couples and provides support for beneficiaries to cooperate in building their own homes represents a successful approach to overcome acute problem of housing shortage." (M, 30-35 years)*

In addressing the issue of "suitability" of the presented scenarios of the GSSL questionnaire to the Egyptian socioeconomic and cultural contexts, respondents stressed the need to give priority to problems of

pollution, congestion, slums, and deteriorated services in urban Egypt.

*A quote by a planning research fellow: "National development plans and public service programs must distinguish between affluent, middle class and low income societies; central and municipal resources must be redirected to improve the standard of living and to meet the essential needs of the unprivileged groups, particularly those living in urban slums." (F, 24-29 years)*

The respondents emphasized the role of business which can promote green marketing and provide consumers with environmental information of their products, extending loans of low or no interest rate on purchases of energy-efficient products and encouraging small green enterprises; a successful model mentioned by respondents is the "Egyptian Social Fund for Development" which already created over half a million jobs in small and cottage enterprises to alleviate problems of youth unemployment". Recognizing the need for scenarios adaptable to the Egyptian situation, respondents proposed alternative scenarios for housekeeping, food and mobility categories. The ideas presented were preliminary and require further elaboration and evaluation.

Another key issue raised by respondents is the need to institute fiscal and institutional frameworks that enable businesses and consumers to adopt sustainable production and consumption practices (e.g. low-interest government loans offered to SMEs to invest in cleaner production technologies and practices). Respondents pinpointed to the "rebound effect" of actions that encourage environmentally-sound practices on one hand, and intensify pollution problems on the other. In the respondents' views, the rebound effect must be considered in policies and programs aimed at reducing the negative impacts of consumer goods.

Referring to the presented scenarios in the GSSL questionnaire, respondents' motivations for the favored food scenario of urban gardening include provision of healthy food, self-sufficiency for food supply, greening the surrounding environment and money saving on food purchases. Most respondents revealed understanding of the benefits and willingness to apply urban gardening in their communities; the most prominent suggestion is to facilitate land acquisition for gardening in the neighborhoods and promoting coordination among stakeholders, particularly the interested individuals in the community.



*A quote from a housewife on energy saving in households "the government encouraged by apparent economic savings rather than environmental benefits is offering a subsidized energy-saving lighting system in Greater Cairo to replace the power consuming incandescent bulbs with power-saving fluorescent lamps." (F, 30-35)*

The motivations for the favored mobility scenario of car pooling on demand include money and energy savings, less pollution, and easing of traffic congestion in cities. Most respondents understand the economic and environmental benefits of the car pooling scenario, but expressed safety concerns. To ensure success of car pooling, a management scheme should be developed by municipalities including designation of parking/meeting places.

Saving electricity and reducing power generation' emissions are cited as motivations for energy management in households. Most respondents favored this quick measure due to its immediate environmental and economic implications.

Identifying preferred scenarios among and between mobility, food, and housekeeping categories to fit all consumers proved to be difficult, as respondents with different backgrounds have different preferences towards shared and cooperative use in different social environments. Integrating behavioral changes in social polices was cited by respondents as an important option to ensure sustainability of lifestyle. They noted that the GSSL scenarios offer acceptable alternatives, with some modifications, involving behavioral changes that encompass schemes for car pooling and sharing, saving energy in households, urban gardening and new approaches to food management.

### Objection to scenarios

Respondents observed that, some scenarios are not necessarily environmentally friendly. For example, the respondents referred to government actions to encourage mobility through reducing taxes on passenger cars and subsidizing gasoline and diesel oil which do not reflect the high environmental costs of these carbon-intensive private transport systems.

*A response quoted from a university student "Being barred from engaging in political activities, Student Unions should ensure students' participation in the social system and in gaining leadership and decision-making experience. Unions may also offer the young adults a platform where their voices can be heard, and where they can bring in new ideas and concepts to improve the functioning of society." (M, 18-23 years)*

Permitting roof gardening in poorly structured buildings results in damaging consequences, and uncontrolled bicycling in main streets and congested downtown areas cause severe traffic problems. Such scenarios may convey wrong signals to consumers regarding the actual price of the product and the cost society and the environment have to bear. Undesirable social behaviors may be encouraged by financial subsidies, laxity of law enforcement, and improper planning of work-leisure activities.

*A successful example cited by respondents is "the Cement Environmental Fund which is financed by the industry, consumers and the government, where an additional charge is imposed on cement products; the generated money is matched by government fund and used for investment in cleaner technologies in the cement industry. The action was accompanied with heavy publicity leading to public acceptance and significant reduction of dust emissions from cement plants in Egypt.*

Respondents expressed views that some scenarios are impractical in Egypt due to lack of suitable infrastructure, or contradictions with established traditions and norms. Long distance travel and absence of special lanes hinders bicycling, lack of space renders local composting unfit for congested residential communities, and family take-away food conflict with the habits and culture of young urban dwellers.

## TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

### Demand for information on sustainability

Almost half of the responses indicate no or slight awareness of contemporary environmental problems. A major factor impeding positive environmental behavior of young men and women is insufficient information about local and global environmental challenges such as water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, climate change, and ozone depletion. On the other hand, respondents feel that adopting sustainable lifestyle is hampered by inadequate legislative settings, as well as poor compliance. Attaining sustainable lifestyle requires a new approach and information venues that take into account the full lifecycle impact of everything produced, used, and disposed of. About 73 percent of the responses perceive information as a driver for change; as seen by respondents, actions to enhance provision of information on sustainability comprise:

- Providing reliable and simple information to businesses, the public, and consumers on proper measures for integrating environmental behavior in everyday life;

- Executing targeted campaign to improve societal understanding of sustainable demands without unnecessary consumption that satisfy non-material needs;
- Promoting sustainable consumption behavior that encompasses both internal (socio-psychological, culture) and external (institutional, economic, infrastructure) factors;
- Publicizing sustainable lifestyle approaches that fit specific needs of various groups within the society which differ in their willingness and ability to adopt new sustainable scenarios in everyday life;
- Providing information on eco-efficient alternatives with minimum rebound effect; and
- Promulgating cooperative behavior for alternative scenarios of sustainable lifestyle.

*One professional was worried about the potential of comprising the needs of the already depressed generation for the benefit of future generations; her definition of sustainable lifestyle is "living our life in a way that alleviates hardships and ensure wellbeing without affecting the ability of future generations to live their lives in a decent and productive manner." (F, 24-29)*

### Understanding and Talking about Sustainability

A collective view of respondents on the definition of youth is "a period of young adulthood, typically characterized by high consumption, increased independence in lifestyle and personal choices, and improved thinking and self-acting with less family influence." Sustainable living as deduced from responses is "a lifestyle that attempts to minimize and/or optimize the individuals and society's use of the natural resources and environmental amenities". In a face-to-face interview with some respondents, an extensive discussion took place on the understanding and requirements of sustainability and sustainable needs for developing countries; with some wording variations their common definition is the one stated in 1987 promoted in the Brundtland Report "development that meets the essential needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.»

Respondents unanimously pointed to the significant influence of government in shaping social norms, strengthening cultural values and promoting resources conservation. This influence is demonstrated in structuring the educational system, by regulating advertising and the media, by publicizing guidance for public and social norms, and by influencing

consumer preference through trading practices. The respondents also noted the pivotal role played by the religious leadership in advocating a spiritual context for sustainable lifestyle and environment-regarding behavior among young Egyptians.

Enabling and engaging are given special attention in the GSSL response as both are closely linked to capacity building. Education and training on means of sustainable lifestyle are not limited to formal education, but also extended to training civil societies and NGOs who can subsequently convey the message to consumers, community leaders and other stakeholders.

### From definition to action

Priority actions identified by respondents to achieve sustainable lifestyle encompass the following:

- Bridging geographical disparities and guarantee equitable access to resources and services;
- Raising consumer awareness and promoting interventions for rational use of resources;
- Capacity building to sustain environmental quality and enhance waste recycling practices; and
- Developing alternative renewable sources of energy and conserving non-renewable sources.

*A pilot project has been cited for collection of spent cooking oil from households in Alexandria, to be subsequently refined and used for production of marketable cleansing agents and biofuels.*

Recommended measures to promote sustainable lifestyle, as gathered from responses received, were numerous; priority recommendations deduced from responses are given below:

- Establishing consumer protection entity (a civil society independent of the government) and institution of market-based instruments including eco-taxes on products to eliminate environmentally damaging practices and encourage positive actions from producers. A special emphasis should be given to consumer cooperation to ensure effectiveness of these actions;
- Policy makers should make use of policies that are agreeable to the majority and are therefore likely to be easily accepted;
- Engaging young adults in community initiatives such as greening residential places, beautification and cleansing of neighborhood, and operating "coop markets" for fresh produce and household goods;
- The government should address societal changes by instituting innovative measures to encourage

rational behavior among young people towards sustainable consumption; the change in youth behavior can be also supported by communicating environmental information relevant to the youth concerns such as eating healthy food (e.g. fresh produce) or saving household costs (e.g. energy efficiency of electronic and lighting appliances). Sustainable marketing can be advocated by advertising agencies, trend-setters, and producers of goods. The media and the advertising establishment can make sustainable consumption attractive and fashionable for young generation; and

- Strengthening cooperation among local governments and community leaders to encourage environment-friendly initiatives such as banning plastic packaging or establishing waste recycling schemes. Collective efforts of local governments, businesses and NGOs can stimulate changes in people's behavior; reducing wastage by buying products with little packaging represents a key component of sustainable purchasing habit.

- Tim Jackson, "The challenge of Sustainable Lifestyles", State of the World Report, the Worldwatch Institute, 2008.
- WHO, "Health and Sustainable Development: Addressing the Issues and Challenges", Johannesburg, 2002.
- UNESCO/ UNEP, "Youth, Sustainable Consumption Patterns and Life Styles", 2001.

## CONCLUSIONS

Young adults in Egypt are more attentive to their social and environmental responsibilities. The general consensus is that behavioral changes coupled with political action, and awareness campaigns could cause significant achievements toward sustainable lifestyle. Future national plans should encompass the dual objective of improving the educational, recreational and employment opportunities for young people, and creating an environment that promotes their participation in public life and decision-making processes. In competitive urban communities of Cairo and Alexandria, self-serving behavior tends to be dominant, while in the less competitive communities in small cities and towns, cooperative behaviors dominate.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Egyptian Institute of National Planning, "Egypt Human Development Report 2010, Youth in Egypt: Building Our Future" Project Report, 2010.
- Stockholm Environmental Institute, "A literature Review on Sustainable Lifestyles and Recommendations for Future Research", Project Report, 2009.
- UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Stockholm Environment Institute, "Business of Low Carbon and Resource Efficient Lifestyles –Making the Business Case for Sustainable Consumption", April 2008.

# Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles – Report of the survey in India

## India: 228 participants

Venkatesh Trust For Education and Excellence, Gurgaon / Delhi, India

India has followed the path of planned development over the last 60 years, though most of agriculture and industry is in private hands (that is, driven by market forces). The Planning Commission of the Government of India maps out every five years, the broad contour of development after reviewing the performance of the previous five years. The current plan (2007 – 2012) has the theme of “inclusive growth” so that all sections of the society and all parts of the country including the very poor become both participants and beneficiaries of the growth process. Considering the large and growing population (from the present estimated over 1 billion to 1.28 billion by 2016) and the low level of per capita income of about Rs 38,084 less than 1000 US dollars during 2008-09, the large incidence of poverty and the low achievement in many areas of human development, a high rate of economic growth (over 10%) is considered to be a necessity for removing poverty, and providing health, nutrition, education and employment at acceptable standards.

Moreover, this process of development and growth has to be conceived and implemented through a democratic process as India has had vibrant and active democratic institutions at all levels, namely the national, regional or state and local levels.

Rapid economic growth, industrialization and urbanization will also increase greenhouse gas emissions, but with a third of India’s population living below the poverty line, less than US dollar 1/- a day, sustainable development has to address issues of food, nutrition and energy deficiencies, according to Dr. M.S.Swaminathan, Chairman of MSS Research Foundation, Chennai, India. Climate change would adversely affect rainfall patterns and food production. Rising sea level could increase flood risk. Climate change would also threaten human health by favouring water and water-borne diseases. But imposing restrictions on development will affect GDP. A 30% reduction in Carbon-dioxide emissions will raise the number of poor by 17.5%. , says Dr. Manoj Panda, Professor of the Indira Gandhi Institute for Rural Development.

Faced with this dilemma of growth versus environment, India has put in some mitigation strategies by promoting energy conservation, alternative fuels, renewable energy and afforestation. But the country’s ability to adopt such measures on a large scale is limited. As Kapadia Chatterjee, a scientist at the NGO, Winrock International says, it is not that the task is unknown or that the methods for coping do not exist, but the problem is the lack of necessary resources. The large regional and socioeconomic disparities also affect local communities’ ability to adapt, says Prodipto Ghosh of the Indian Environment Ministry.

Local communities find it difficult to visualize life in 2050 or to understand what a half-degree rise in temperature will mean. Disadvantaged groups already face pressures from population growth, natural resource depletion and socio economic problems. What we need to do, says Patwardhan is to link day-to-day choices and activities to the long term response to climate change.

The Government of India has launched eight national missions monitored by the Prime Minister to tackle the problem of climate change and environmental issues. There is a need to add another important mission: that of changing the lifestyles that are at the root of the present economic and environmental problems.

The current economic model may not lead to solutions. It is lifestyle changes and the associated new models of sustainable consumption and production that may lead to a feasible and satisfactory solution. It is in this context that it becomes necessary to understand people’s perceptions and aspirations for a better life and to build solutions conducive to both economic growth and sustainable development and build a climate in which youth, children, communities and institutions absorb and practice the values appropriate to the new model.

## THE PRESENT STUDY AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS

The present study is an effort to qualitatively understand the aspirations and attitudes of urban and suburban



young people (age group 18-35) in or near the capital city of New Delhi, admittedly not representative of India, but with nevertheless useful insights.

The total 228 respondents were approached largely through educational institutions by the Venkatesh Trust for Education and Excellence, a Registered NGO which took up the survey. There were in all 59.9% males and 40.1% females. Except for the 3.4% of respondents who were less than 18, the remaining 96.9% belonged to the 18-35 years age group.

To understand the cultural context, it must be noted that in India, not only students, but also young adults generally live with their parents. Thus, 127 of the respondents constituting about 65% were living with their parents, grandparents or relatives. This is a cultural practice that children, even married adults, and earning persons, generally stay with their parents. Only a small percentage lived alone or with friends. This cultural trait has to be taken into account in interpreting the pattern of expenditure and ways of living. Only 25% lived in rented rooms or shared apartments. This perhaps is also the reason why only few have ranked house rent, energy and water, transport etc. as No: 1 in their expenditure.

Of great interest and concern is the lack of community trust and solidarity as reflected in the present survey. This is not due to frequent changes of neighbourhood or due to lack of information. More than 100 respondents do not agree with the view that the local area is a friendly or pleasant place to live in or a community with strong solidarity. Most respondents do not trust each other and would not feel comfortable to ask their neighbors to keep their eye on the property while they are away. Similarly a large number (over 50%) feel that they cannot count on their neighbors for taking action. However, in their response to the question of what they liked most in everyday life in regard to neighbourhood, of the 191 respondents 104 said that they liked sharing with everyone. Another 75 like community life and good relations with their neighbours. This is in complete contrast to the lack of trust in their neighbours in response to an earlier question. These need not be seen as contradictory. **While current trust may be lacking there is definitely an aspiration towards building such trust and can be a positive factor for building community programme.**

The negative perceptions are also possibly linked to the opinion that the respondents feel that they have little influence on local policies.

The above situation can be reversed dramatically through participatory development and environmental activity. It is only by bringing together young people for common tasks, greater degree of solidarity, community trusts and feeling can be developed.

How satisfied or dissatisfied were the respondents with their life was assessed on a 10- point scale. Surprisingly, over 90% expressed satisfaction that is over six points in that scale. This **indicates a certain measure of acceptance of the current situation either due to lack of awareness or a hope for better situation or due to a feeling of powerlessness.**

This was also confirmed by the answer to the question what they would tell their friends about their life. Here 41% of respondents felt that they would tell that they had good life and were satisfied. About 33% said that they were not feeling very good and struggling with their ambitions. The same response was given in regard to the question about what life looks like presently. Regarding present dislike and what different ways would they like, a good percentage had no answers to give and had very little to say on what they wanted differently. A small number wanted cleanliness, an active life, more independence and recognition for those who worked to remove poverty. Though in a minority, the responses of the young people (51) who dislike selfishness, unhygienic condition, laziness and want to remove poverty and help others and achieve greater cleanliness indicates high potential for developing voluntary / community action.

Comparing their life with that of their grandparents many felt that their grandparents life must have been equally good and was simple, relaxed and easy, though some felt that it would have been monotonous, laborious and without facilities. When asked what life would be like 10 years hence, 48 felt it would be "extremely fast and busy", 63 felt there would be no tension and it would be comfortable with a lot of gadgets, with interesting new challenges and it can be fun and with a lot of opportunities for exploring. **28 felt that they would help the poor. The majority perceived the future very positively.** But some of the words used by respondents were that life would be "more messy" "worse travel", "stressful " and "crowded". The pressure and tensions of developing urban and suburban areas could account for these negative perceptions and these do not detract much from the general perception of a better future.

As regards important Global priorities, nearly 70% gave high priority that is 1st, 2nd or 3rd rank on a eight point scale to reduction of poverty or reduction of gap between the rich and poor. Nearly 60% gave high priority for combating crime and prevention of conflicts. Only 47% gave high priority for fighting environmental degradation and pollution. Thus as of now prevention of environmental degradation does not seem to occupy very high priority amongst the youth.

On activities and appliances at home, the vast majority referred to computers, TV, micro oven etc. and only 23 referred to social life and another 38 to sports. This appliance and gadget orientation does not bode very well in terms of energy requirements implied by this life style.

One of the important responses in the study related to what young people think their everyday life would look like ten years hence, what would be their ideal way of living and what would be the worst way of living. The responses are summarized in the table below.

The below responses could possibly be an extrapolation of the problem and difficulties arising in a fast growing urban and suburban area and also the aspirations for a future without such problems. But in response to the question on their perception regarding the ideal way of living only 20 wanted luxurious and comfortable life and another 46 wanted

better standard, good transport and lots of money while a very large number (122) looked forward to a nice, calm and peaceful environment and live without worry in life. These contradicting perceptions show ambivalence towards modern gadgets. It would be right to assume that most people would like to have some number of modern gadgets and appliances, but would not pursue a very luxurious life.

So far as this sample is concerned, they are definitely not for the rat race kind of development, and ever growing standard of life as advocated by economists. This is further confirmed by the responses to the worst way of living. Out of 139 respondents, a large number (48%) feared living in unhygienic condition or living under the control of someone (asking them to do or not to do something). On the other hand, this **sample of respondents attaches a lot of importance to hygienic conditions and freedom.**

## SCENARIO ANALYSIS

### Mobility

- Out of 168 who responded, 79.76% preferred car sharing/ carpool arrangement while only 20.24% preferred bicycle centers. Car travel was preferred for convenience, to save time, fuel, energy and money through sharing and pooling. Some respondents felt that “*sharing would be the way to reduce the number of cars on the road*” and

Mission of the future	Ideal way of living	Worse way of living
Life would be extremely fast (19%)	Living in a nice calm and peaceful environment (19%)	Living in unhygienic conditions. (15.1%)
There would be no tension (16.8%)	Ideal partner, good job, better standard of living and good transport (12.9%)	Living under other's control (13.8%)
Life will be boring (13.4%)	Being satisfied physically, mentally and emotionally (3.9%)	Living without own money and social life (10.8%)
Would be helping the poor (12.5%)	Living life free and enjoying (5.6%)	Uncertainty about life, job insecurity and insecurity in society (2.6%)
Life will be comfortable with lots of gadgets (4.3%)	Living luxuriously and being comfortable (6.6%)	Living alone without money and without love and being busy only with work and no time for family or oneself (4.7%)
Life will be interesting with new challenges (3.4%)	Life without stress and lots of money (6.9%)	
They will be fighting for jobs (3.6%)	Life without worries (7.8%)	

meant “*joining hands with the community.*” It was felt that cycling “would require infrastructure” (cycle path) and “would be time consuming.” It is clear that the respondents have understood the sustainability dimension of the scenario. Suggestions were also made for (a) Pooling and availability of bicycles near certain parking areas of car (ii) comfortable AC and Non-AC buses preferably using bio-fuel. Only very few felt that the car was a prestige symbol and people owning car “would not care for environment”. There was also a view that people travelling by bus and 2-wheelers will adopt car sharing but not those who are used to having their own cars.

- There were also suggestions for making car sharing or public transport compulsory, however, in a democratic society such compulsion will be difficult but if sufficient communication facilities are available, and shared or pooled cars leave at frequent intervals it would be possible to make car sharing / pooling a success.
- Some flexibility in working hours might also help. Since metro train links are being developed in Delhi and surrounding areas, car pools/sharing/ public transport and bicycles to metro stations and residences to work places would be of obvious importance.

### Food

- Out of 176 who responded, 76.14% favoured urban garden, while 23.90% favoured vegetable bag subscription. Among those who favoured vegetable bag subscription, 26 wanted to have vegetables delivered at their doorstep while 21 wanted to buy them in a supermarket. The urban garden was preferred by a large number as it provided fresh vegetables and added to the greenery and as unused urban land and spare time could be utilized and as also the vegetables could be grown without chemicals.

### Housekeeping

- Out of 154 who responded, 50.64% preferred urban composting while 76 preferred community laundry. Those who preferred community laundry mentioned that it would save time, money, energy and water and that it was convenient, feasible and affordable. But some felt that laundering was a personal affair and wanted their clothes to dry naturally. In India there has been a long standing practice of clothes, mainly cotton, being given to a washer man (dhobi) for washing and

pressing. However with the advent of washing machines middle classes prefer washing at home and have a feeling it is hygienic. However, pressing is done by dhobis or washer men. There is thus a base for developing community laundry. Urban composting will also be popular as a means of better utilization of waste and re cycling. Already there are some areas where urban composting has been promoted and the support of half the respondents for this indicates that this could also prove popular as many have supported urban garden in the earlier scenario.

As to the question regarding which agency could develop these services, a vast majority felt that it should be government and Municipal agencies. Only a few have faith in private associations and individual efforts and certainly there is hardly any faith in business organizations. This may be because businesses in the past have shown little real or genuine concern for such social issues despite the talk of corporate social responsibility. If businesses come forward and implement concrete programmes, the faith in business organisations will doubtlessly improve. There was also a suggestion that Town Planning Authority must earmark land for urban garden and urban composting for every neighbourhood to promote local production of vegetable and food items.

Since globalisation promotes the construction of mega malls and large centralized structures, alternative investments in decentralized efforts through local shops for groceries and vegetables would save energy and fuel and will be more convenient for the communities concerned. These also are likely to create more jobs.

Cultural diversity and other explanatory factors: From much of what has been stated above, it can be seen that this sample of respondents are not after fast urban life, acquisition of wealth and power, status etc., and other factors that are generally attributable to consumerist way of life which has caused serious problem for environment. This may be rather surprising as the sample comes from educated young Indians – both students and young adults aspiring for higher incomes and professional advancements. But if we take into account the cultural and philosophical traditions of India, which have always emphasized contentment, family obligations, and a life of moderation with equal importance being attached to active enterprise, the pursuit of knowledge and peace, and religious areas - results are in tune with the cultural values. Also it should be noted that this

urban sample is from lower and upper middle classes and if the sample had been from upper class elites the responses might conceivably be different.

## COMMUNICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Amongst those who responded to the question as to what makes a way of living sustainable (50%), quite a few stated that pollution free environment, a friendly and helpful neighbourhood, a wise use of energy and environment and concerns about others were important. Some felt that compromising on pleasures arising out of excessive wastage of resources and changing the attitude of negligence to one of loving one's environment would bring about sustainable living.

Some said they would prepare themselves to bring about the required changes, for example, banning the use of plastics, saving water and using resources carefully. Asked whether information on climate change would modify their reactions, 62% (out of 129 respondents) felt that it would, and 23% felt that it would not.

It was interesting to note that in responding to the questionnaire, respondents did not refer explicitly to sustainable development though it was implicit in their answers. But in the later part of the questionnaire, the respondents were more explicit about sustainable development. This shows the importance of information and communication. It was apparent that the respondents did not have sufficient information at the beginning, but developed both interest and knowledge as a result of answering the questionnaire. There is, therefore, a need for more systematic effort to promote knowledge on climate change, environment and sustainable production and consumption. The number of respondents who felt that more information will not change their attitude was only one. Some felt that science and new knowledge would help them to build good environment. About 93 respondents felt that knowing more about climate change will bring people around and called for communication with clear definition, values and right words. Pollution-free environment, friendly and helpful neighbourhood, wise use of energy and environment as well as concern about others were mentioned as essentials of sustainable development. Others mentioned that living must be based on the necessities for a sustained life and that use of renewable resources would make living sustainable and that 'sustainable' should be a new Mantra.

To a specific question what they could do in their everyday life, to make living sustainable some stated that they would prepare themselves for required changes.

Some others said they would save water and plants and use resources in a limited way. To communicate these ideas, the following suggestions were made:

- **Environmental studies at the level of schooling**
- **Awareness programmes**
- **People's efforts to do their best towards sustainable living**
- **Helping and doing environmentally friendly things.**

There was also a suggestion that 'incentives' should be given to people for adopting sustainable lifestyles.

Young people are looking forward to job security, a good family life and a good social life, good environmental conditions and reasonable transport. Respondents in this sample are clearly for a sustainable way of life, and are not in favour of fast, tension filled busy lives oriented towards the accumulation of wealth or seeking of power and status. These ideals and perceptions are clearly in favour of the sustainable way of living defined above and provide the basis on which effective policies for sustainable development could be laid down. This would naturally include eradication of poverty, job insecurity, pollution and unhygienic conditions, along with effective communication strategies aimed in particular at well to do sections and all kinds of elites both in developing and developed society. In the final analysis, the elites have to show the way by restraint, by sustainable way of living and inclusive and sustainable growth.

Only 9% of the 215 respondents were members of environmental or sustainable development groups. Another 38 were members of neighbourhood organization or community service groups. Even if we add neighbourhood and community service organizations the number goes up to only 27%. Thus there is a need to educate and mobilize vast numbers of youth and students who presently are not members of any organization or are members of only cultural and/or sports or religious organizations. These groups appear to be largely unconcerned with social development and environment. These people should constitute a special focus for a "communication strategy".



## CONCLUSIONS

The present study has drawn attention to the scope for many positive policy initiatives, programmes and communication strategies. But a word of caution is necessary. The present sample is from better educated and relatively well-to-do middle class living in the metropolitan city of New Delhi and its surroundings. The responses of rural people and poorer sections might conceivably be different

It is therefore important that there should be a proper survey of different sections of society including educated and uneducated, upper, middle and lower classes and metropolitan, big town, small town and rural areas. Such a survey should focus on existing lifestyles and preferred lifestyles and also knowledge of and response to sustainable development and ecological concerns.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote greater participation, greater solidarity and higher trust and raise the social capital index.
- Help improve sustainable development at the community level through common action and common values around sustainable development.
- There is good potential for educational and promotional work leading to development of values and behaviors appropriate to sustainable lifestyles.
- Per capita energy and water consumption by economic elites and other role models should be brought down. Media print and electronic and personal example can be effectively used for the same.
- The challenge for policies and programme is how to convert this high level of environmental awareness into action.
- Utilizing elements of local culture and tradition favouring simplicity, friendship with nature, and helpful relationship with others should be encouraged.
- Public authority should ensure cheap and comfortable public transportation systems to avoid excessive use of automobiles.
- Create awareness and action amongst the young for adopting environmentally friendly alternatives. These have to be practically demonstrated and made viable.
- Ideal way of living is envisaged as calm and peaceful life. Many do not want to go after luxuries, but prefer simple, regular income based

life. These are elements which should be used for sustainable development

- Print and electronic media, education formal and non formal and all forms of communication should be used in a coordinated and focused manner to generate support for sustainable production and consumption.

## REFERENCES

- Government of India Planning Commission (2007-2012). Eleventh Five Year Plan: Inclusive Growth. Volume 1. Govt. of India New Delhi. Padma, T.V. (2006). Development versus Climate Change in India. 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2006 EN WHO/P. Virot

# An analysis of Japanese results of the Global Survey for Sustainable Lifestyles

## Japan: 189 participants

Dr. Midori Aoyagi-Usui (Chief, National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan)

Dr. Seiko Yamazaki & Ms. Yoko Yoshizawa (Dentsu Inc., Japan)

### CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR YOUNG JAPANESE PROFESSIONALS

Japan has enjoyed a very low unemployment rate since labor surveys began after World War II. Its number has never exceeded 5.4% during this period (Statistics Bureau, 2009), which is surprisingly low, even for an OECD country. This sustained low level is a result of Japan's successful economic growth after WWII, although the growth has caused many environmental issues.

*"I am busy and do the best I can" (F, 18–23, LSL=10).*

*"My life is fulfilling. There are many things that I want to do, but it's sad that I don't have enough skills. I often feel that I have little time and sometimes feel that I am being left behind. I sometimes worry about being healthy, enjoying my private life, working for society, and spending time with my friends" (F, 18–23, LSL=10).*

*"Although I'm working as a member of a society, I cannot see any hope in my life and cannot find my goals. Maybe I am just wandering around doing nothing" (Office worker, M, 24–25, LSL=0).*

*(LSL=life satisfaction level on a 0 to 10 scale)*

Japanese people have worked hard to maintain stable economic growth, to keep high employment rate and to provide a higher education for their children. The high school entrance rate was 97% in 2005, and the university entrance rate was almost 50% in 2005 and 54% in 2008, meaning that about half of the young people who completed their high school education entered universities in 2006. About 12% of those who graduated from universities continued to study in graduate schools in 2005.<sup>11</sup> But, for people between the ages of 18 and 35, a notable issue in the past 10 years has been the increasing number of people classified as "Not

in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) or as "freeters" (part-time job-hoppers).<sup>12</sup>

The circumstances of contemporary Japanese young people clearly have changed from the "all-Japanese-are-middle-class" mentality, which was often used to describe Japanese society in the 1970's and 1980's, to "the unequal society" whose some groups of people pursue higher education, higher income lifestyles, while others remains NEET or freeters.

### THE RESPONDENTS

We used several routes to recruit respondents: an academic society, university professors, student organizations, environmental organizations, and the International Association of Universities (IAU). Through these recruitment processes we collected 189 completed questionnaires. Many of the respondents were students or alumni of prestigious universities such as the University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Waseda University, Keio University, Sophia University, and similar institutions, meaning that our respondents were highly educated and generally came from wealthier families. Although Japan has a relatively small level of income disparity, there is a significant family income difference between those who attend university and those who do not, and this difference is larger at prestigious universities (University of Tokyo, 2008).

About 60% of the respondents were male, more than 40% were 18–23 years old, and more than half were university students. About 35% were living alone, and the rest living with their family or a partner. About 35% were living in mega cities and 27% in big cities. More than half were living in apartments and less than 30% in single-family homes. The type of dwelling is

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2007

<sup>12</sup> More than 2 million people in this age range were freeters and more than 0.6 million were NEETs in 2006 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2007 & Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2008) and according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2007), 5–12% of new graduates from high schools, universities or junior colleges became freeters or NEETs in 2006.

important because apartments in larger cities are often very small in Japan, and some have no balcony or receive insufficient sunlight.

As consumers, Japanese youth put emphasis on their "taste", or in other words, being identified as "picky." According to internet-based survey done by Dentsu Inc.,(2010),<sup>13</sup> 27% of teenagers and twenties answered " we want to use money for only our favorite, our taste." This number is 10% higher than average. Also, they enjoy consumption. More than 50% of teenagers and those in their twenties said "we live convenient and materially rich lives." This is also 10% higher than average. About 41% answered "When new products appear at the shop, I am excited to try it." This is also 10% higher than average. In general, the younger generation tends not to be interested in social issues, such as poverty, peace. According to the same survey above, teenagers, twenties and thirties chose those options such as "I am interested in global peace issues," "I support global poverty reduction by donation" less than other generations.

## RESPONDENTS' VIEW OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

In general, respondents led busy and fulfilling lives. Those who reported they had trouble finding a purpose in life or envisioning their future prospects tended to have lower life satisfaction levels. For the socio-professional categories in the GSSL, our respondents' average standard of living was quite high.

### Perspectives of the past

Respondents were asked to imagine their grandparents' lifestyles as compared with their own current lifestyles. Many respondents "admired" the older generation's way of living for different reasons, some of them highlighting strong community and social relationships that plays a crucial role in sustainable development at the local level:

*"People had a stronger sense of 'feeling alive,' and there was a stronger energy in people" (M, 30–35, , LSL=8).*

*"I cannot imagine it well, but I think people helped each other in their community" (F, 30–35, LSL=8).*

*"Because of the shortage of goods and materials, I think people enjoyed shopping more than than now. I imagine people were very thrilled when they got a TV or a car" (M, 30–35, LSL=8).*

Another point of view was also expressed about women's conditions of living:

*"Women had no other choice than getting married and being housewives. As a housewife, there were many more things to do than now. So, it was more difficult for women to feel happy, but it was easier for men to feel happy" (F, 30–35, LSL=9).*

The World Economic Forum released a "gender gap index" in November 2009, and Japan ranked 98 out of 130 countries/areas. This is quite low for a developed country. Despite its economic position in the world, Japanese society is not well developed from the point of view of gender equality as compared with the global standard.

### Future perspectives

How the future will look like...(N=161)	
It will hardly differ from my present life	28.6%
I will have a more fulfilling private life	21.1%
My life will be busier	16.1%
My life will be slower and more sustainable	13.7%

The most common response about future lifestyles was "hardly differ from their present lives" (28.6%), but many respondents (mostly students) thought that they would get a job and that "their lives would be busier" (16.1%). Some respondents wrote about their own personal lives, whereas others wrote about society as a whole. Many wrote that they would be busier than now, especially students, when others thought that the future would be more convenient

*"I think that life will become more convenient due to the spread of the Internet. However, I don't know if the convenience we achieve will have positive effects" (F, 18–23, LSL=7).*

There were two basic views of the future lifestyles, which were summed up by one respondent as follows:

*"I think it [the future] can go two ways. One way is a slower, more natural, symbiotic way of thinking combined with enjoying many aspects of the modern lifestyle. The other is an individual life with the more electrified experience of the virtual world . . . I think I would rather take the first way" (F, 30–35, LSL=7).*

Respondents were also asked "what would be the worst way of living for you?" and some wrote,

<sup>13</sup> Sustainable lifestyle Survey, March,2010, Dentsu Inc.,Tokyo

"a lonely life." As we will see in the next section, many respondents were not well connected to their neighbors. Others wrote about work, and many of the respondents seemed to be preoccupied by work. A fear of the loss of freedom was also expressed, for example, "A restrained life with no happiness" and "a life dominated by the systems we made."

**Respondents' worst scenarios for the future**

"A life of just living to work" (M, 24–29, LSL=0).

"A life dominated by the systems we made" (M, 30–35, LSL=1).

"A lonely life" (F, 18–23, LSL=6).

"A restrained life with no happiness" (M, 18–23, LSL=8).

**Relationships with others, communities**

"It's easy not to have any connections with my neighbors, but at the same time, it may be fun to get to know them" (M, 18–23, LSL=4).

"In my neighborhood, there is a kindergarten. I like their laughing, and it makes me smile too. What I want to change is to make connections with my neighbors. It's a bit scary that I don't know the people living next door" (F, 18–23, LSL=5).

"Advantages: the place has a lot of green and quiet, even though it's near the city. In addition, there are many roads to go for a walk. Disadvantages: I hardly have any connections with my neighbors" (F, 18–23, LSL=7).

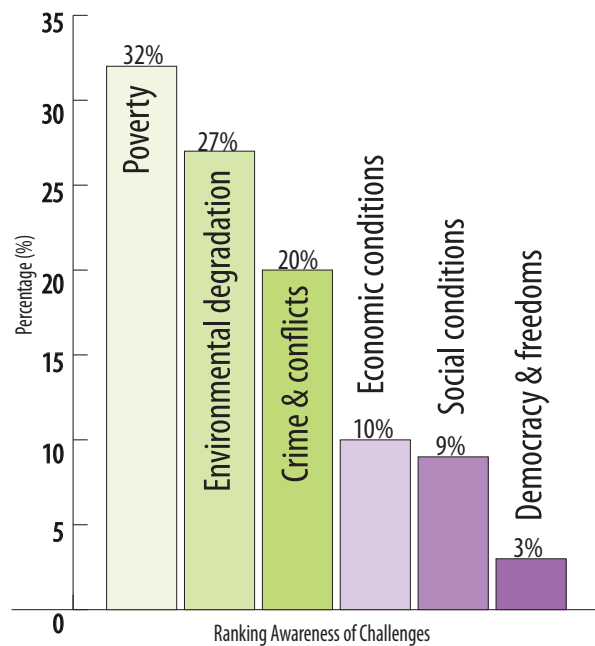
Although our respondents had a higher than average standard of living, their social capital (i.e., their social relationships) was not as high. One reason is respondents are afraid of being "tied" to strong community responsibilities. Another reason is that our respondents live in current address very short time (19.4% answered less than one year, 36% answered 1 to 4 years), so that they have not been informed about their communities yet.

70% of respondents also declared they were not very informed or not informed at all about how their neighborhood was managed. In addition, only 24% of them thought they lived in a neighborhood where people trust each other.

Many stated that they had no contact with their neighbors. About 52% of respondents said they strongly disagreed with the statement, "I would feel comfortable asking my neighbors to keep an eye on

my house and property when I'm away." Respondents' life in their community was either very isolated or dense. Many lived in urban centers, but they hardly connected with other people in their neighborhoods. Those who lived in old town areas seemed to be hesitant to build community relationships.

"The town is old and its community ties are strong, so it's very difficult for outsiders to get into the community.... I avoid strong connections because it's a burden" (F, 30–35, LSL=9).



Curiously, these low levels of social capital did not seem to affect the respondents' overall view of life satisfaction. The average life satisfaction level of our respondents was high (7.4 in 10).

More than 50% of our respondents had not joined any organizations that were not job related. 34.4% of our respondents answered they are members of "youth, sports clubs or outdoor activities club, cultural/musical/dance/theatre organizations". Young people are socializing based of "functional" groups, rather "community" or "living area" based activities.

**Poverty and environment as global priorities**

When they are asked "the most important priorities globally", our respondents are very much aware of "sustainability" issues, such as poverty (30.6% chose this as a first priority) and environmental issues (25.8% chose this as a first priority). Although they did not explicitly state sustainability issues, their focus is not only on the immediate environment.



## Perceptions and understanding of sustainable lifestyles

The respondents' view of a sustainable lifestyle seemed to focus on the efficient use of resources, such as saving electricity and water, and not purchasing wasteful things. One respondent pointed out the problem of having "a moment of happiness" in this "strange cycle" of our current society. Another respondent noted that she was engaged in research for a sustainable society and that she would do her best in that work.

Half of our respondents referred "Responsibility for future generations", when they were asked "what makes a way of living sustainable?" This is because "sustainability" discourse is already shared among young people in Japan.

*"In the long run, it's very hard for me to live with a moment of happiness because it makes me tired. We all know or acknowledge our comfortable way of living. However, we cannot get out of this strange cycle" (M, 30–35, LSL=1).*

*"Since I am doing research on it, I just do my best" (F, 30-35, LSL=9).*

About 20% of respondents said "current lifestyles are too luxurious" - they recognized current Japanese society consumes too much resources.

For you, what makes a way of living 'sustainable'?	
<b>The first things you could do are...</b>	n=113
saving electricity, water...	28.3%
to not purchase wasteful things	23.9%
to gain a better understanding of environmental issues	10.6%
to reduce waste	10.6%
<b>What makes a way of living sustainable?</b>	n=113
Responsibility for future generations	47.7%
Current lifestyles are too luxurious	21.6%
For the Earth	21.6%
For myself	9.0%

## REACTIONS TO THE GSSL SCENARIOS ON FOOD, MOBILITY AND HOUSEKEEPING

This section aims at putting the GSSL results in perspective through existing initiatives in Japan that present strong similarities with the GSSL scenarios.

## Food

Japan has several commercially managed systems that are similar to the GSSL food delivery scenario. Those commercial systems use delivery companies to send their products across the country so there is almost no local context. Co-ops also have their own delivery systems, and their systems do include some local producers. Those delivery systems become popular now, as consumers can purchase fresh (usually, vegetables are delivered within one or two days after harvesting, and delivered in "cool" boxed).

In many regions, farmers or groups of farmers sell their own products at their own shops or at their own spaces at local supermarkets. They do not usually sell "vegetable bags" as such. Those shops are very popular, as consumers know those products are fresh, locally grown and each products have labels that display who produced them. Sometimes shoppers see farmers deliver their products directly from the fields, and put them on the shelves.

Urban gardens are also popular in suburban areas, but not in urban centers because land ownership is very complicated there and land prices are too high to allow for garden space. There are, however, some urban gardens. For example, on Ginza Street in the center of the Tokyo metropolitan area, one of the shop owners keeps bees and sells honey to local cake shops. In the Akihabara area, some building owners have made roof-top gardens. In suburban and rural areas, a "citizen farmland" system is very popular with many local residents. Local governments or local agricultural cooperatives offer land for rent. The primary purpose is to maintain the land as farmland and to not convert urban land to farmland.

## Mobility

Some car-sharing systems have recently been implemented in certain areas. A real estate company has built apartment buildings that include a car-sharing system. A large rental car company has begun to offer a car-sharing system in Tokyo metropolitan areas at very reasonable prices. This company has established 140 stations within Tokyo's 23 wards, and members of the system can make reservations either by mobile phone or online. The fee includes auto insurance and gasoline.

In Tokyo and Sapporo, the Ministry of the Environment has begun two experimental case studies that are very similar to the GSSL's bicycle center scenario. Members of this system use a

credit card in the Tokyo system and an IC card in the Sapporo system. Many local governments tried to establish "rent a bicycle" systems in the past, and some are still trying to establish this system. Many of these have failed, however, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that some users did not return the bicycles to the management centers. Another reason is that the system of roads in Japan is not conducive to bicycling. There are usually no special lanes for bicycles, and accidents between cars and bicycles are common. Even so, the use of bicycles is very popular, especially among students and housewives. Many university students rely on bicycles as their daily means of transportation.

### Housekeeping

Many local governments and companies provide information for the efficient use of energy, such as distributing environmental housekeeping books for individual homes, environmental check lists, and a home environment management system ("ideas" of International Standardization Organization 14001 environmental management system applied to homes), either through printed materials or online. The Shiga prefectural government's program seems to be similar to the GSSL scenario in some regards. The system is called "Shiga Home ESCO" (Energy Service Company). In this program, the prefectural governor appoints professional consultants or local shop owners as Eco Advisers. Eco Advisers consult with individual homeowners about energy-saving opportunities. The homeowner can then receive "eco points," which can be used to purchase energy-saving items in registered local stores.

A real estate developer in Kashiwa City, Chiba Prefecture, near the Tokyo metropolitan area has offered apartments equipped with an "energy saving navigator," which is very similar to the "tool kit" in the GSSL scenario. The apartments in this development sold very well, and the developer is now planning a similar one.

Japan's climate is very humid and hot. Under these conditions, special care must be taken when composting to avoid generating unpleasant odors. Even so, composting is popular in Japan. Many local governments have subsidized the purchase of composting equipment for local residents.

There are many coin-operated laundry facilities in college towns in Japan. Many apartment individual rooms are now equipped with washing machines, however, so the number of coin-operated facilities has

decreased. It is still quite common in Japan for people to dry clothes outside, and apartment balconies are usually equipped with clothes drying poles.

### Responses to GSSL scenarios

Food		% no	% yes
Quick	Vegetable bag subscription	47.7	52.3
Slow	Urban gardens	69.2	30.8
Co-op	Family Take-away	65.0	35.0
Mobility			
Quick	Car sharing	40.0	60.0
Slow	Bicycle centre	44.2	55.8
Co-op	Car-pooling on demand	75.0	25.0
Household			
Quick	Energy management	24.3	75.7
Slow	Urban composting	44.8	55.2
Co-op	Collective laundry	78.3	21.7

Our respondents were more likely to respond "yes" to GSSL scenarios for which there are similar successful Japanese examples.

For the three GSSL Food scenarios, the vegetable bag subscription (quick) scenario was the most popular choice (35.8% by all respondents); among the three Mobility scenarios, bicycle center (slow) was the most popular (41.9% by all respondents); and of the housekeeping scenarios, urban composting was the most popular (slow; 45.3% by all respondents). It appears that the "co-op" scenarios were much less likely to be selected in each case. For example, 65% of the respondents who selected the 'Family take-away' scenario thought it was not even applicable to their lifestyles. The same observation is noted for 75% who selected car-pooling, and 78.3% who selected collective laundry in the other categories.

Several reasons were given for not selecting unsuccessful scenarios. Climate was given for urban composting, but also lack of privacy in other cases. However, many respondents suggested ideas for improving the scenarios, showing these schemes might have a potential to develop if they were developed based on cultural and environmental realities:

*"Although using a recycling bin is a good idea, the odor issue becomes a problem, and one must also think about where to put it" (M, 18–23, LSL=9).*

*"I may achieve it [family take-away] with close relationships. If not, it may be difficult because I don't want other people to intervene in my private life"* (F, 18–23).

*"For elderly people, it might be better to be delivered to their house"* (F, 18–23, Family take-away).

*"For me, the first thing would be to have relationships inside the community"* (F, 24–29, Family take-away).

*"Don't only put recipes inside the bag, but teach the use of a variety of vegetables available in the community"* (F, 30–35, vegetable bag subscription).

It seems that fewer respondents chose co-op scenarios because of their poor relationship with their communities, even though they are busy working at offices and universities and enjoying landscapes in their communities. An explanation might lie in the concepts of *Uchi* and *Soto* in Japanese culture<sup>14</sup>. *Uchi* means inside, insiders, or privacy, and it should be protected from the outside. *Soto* means outside or strangers. Japanese people always recognize and make this distinction. Respondents might feel a violation of *Uchi / Soto* boundary from the co-op scenarios presented in the GSSL.

## CONCLUSION

Our respondents live busy lives, and their descriptions of their everyday lives show that, consciously or unconsciously, they are making a great effort to establish their careers. Those aspects are not always shared among whole populations of this generation, but as young elites, they are struggling for them. They also are contributing to solving the social problems of which they are aware, such as poverty, and environmental issues. They do not pay much attention to the area in which they live and are not well connected with their neighbors or other local organizations in general. This is because they are not familiar with their region, as most of them are newcomers to their area, or they do not know how to cope with traditional communities' dense social relationships.

But they express "envious" feelings when they were asked about their grandparents' lives, one element of this envious feeling is dense social relationship among families or communities. The concept of "sustainability" is shared by our respondents widely, especially responsibility for future generations. Because of this lack of social connection, they tend

to refuse GSSL CO-OP scenarios that require them to cooperate with other people. They do appear to be aware, however, that they need to make some connection with local people and the local area.

Our respondents are highly aware of current issues of sustainability, and their responsibilities, but it seems that they do not know how they can tackle it. In order to tackle the big issues, they know it is better to connect with other people, and communities, but they are afraid of doing so.

## REFERENCES

- Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Labour Force Survey: Historical Data 1 (9), Unemployment Rate" (<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/roudou/lngindex.htm>, accessed November, 15, 2009).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, (2007), "School Education", in "Japan's Education at a Glance 2006" (<http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/07070310/005.pdf>).
- Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, (2008) Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report 2007-2008. (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/wp/wp-hw2/index.html>, accessed November, 15, 2009)
- University of Tokyo (2008), A survey of campus life, Campus newsletter 1380, Campus Life Research Unit, The University of Tokyo.
- World Economic Forum (2009), The Global Gender Gap Report 2008 (<http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2009.pdf>).
- Margaret Lock (1983), Japanese Responses to Social Change-Making the Strange Familiar, The Western Journal of Medicine, 829-834.
- Etsuko Odawara(2005) Cultural Competency in Occupational Therapy: Beyond a Cross-Cultural View of Practice, The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 325-334.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Midori Aoyagi-Usui: The chief of environmental planning section, National Institute for Environmental Studies and adjunct associate professor of the University of Tokyo. Ph.D in rural sociology and agricultural economics. Her main field is public attitudes, understandings and actions for environmental conservation, media analysis, and sustainable consumption and production.

Seiko Yamazaki : Research Director, Dentsu Institute. Ph.D. International Law, who researches on citizen's

<sup>14</sup> For Uchi and Soto concept, see Lock(1983), or Odawara(2005) in the references, as for example.

values and consensus building. She has been conducted "World Values Survey" / Cross-national Surveys in 97 countries since 1990, "Asian Barometer Survey" / Surveys in 14 Asian countries and make comparative analysis on people's social value

Yoko Yoshizawa : Planner Dentsu Institute. She is an expert of environmental and CSR communication. Working with Dr. Yamazaki, she also had conducted Japanese domestic research "Sustainable Lifestyle Survey" in March 2010



# GSSL country paper for Lebanon

## Lebanon: 129 participants

Association of Business Continuity Middle East (BCME) – Lebanon

### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Lebanon is a Mediterranean country with a land area of 10,452 sq. km, a population of about 3.8 million (2006), and an estimated GDP per capita of USD 11,100 (2008). The agricultural sector accounts for 14% of GNP, the industry for 26% and the services for 60%. The population density is approximately of 363 persons per sq km, and the urban population represents around 88% of the total population.

These few numbers already confirm the fact that Lebanon is not a self-sufficient country, but one that has to rely on importing the great majority of its goods from abroad. This aspect can somewhat be explained by the different career interests of the last two generations, the quasi-absence of certain natural resources (i.e. petroleum, gas, metal, etc.), and the long history of political instability of the country that prohibited the development of the economy.

The Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL), a qualitative and prospective questionnaire, was disseminated in Lebanon for a period of 2 months, adopting several strategies such as massive emails, Facebook announcements, posts on universities' official websites and notice boards, personal contacts, and other. However, the survey had to face and overcome several barriers, among which the slow national internet connection and the difficulty of its accessibility for all targets.

*"Although, we are a poor country, and most of us are too busy trying to stay alive, then to pay attention to what light-bulb we use, I am sure if the environment becomes a political, governmental and social topic, everyone will try to adopt it, in small measures at first and in an affordable way" (M, 30-35).*

As a result, 129 young Lebanese adults participated in the GSSL questionnaire, among which 61% were from the male gender despite the fact that currently the youth population in Lebanon is mainly dominated by the female gender due to the high-rate of youth (males) immigration. Most of the participants were graduates (66%) aging mainly between 24-29 years old (47%), and belonging to the middle class of

society (majority of 1 and 2 in the "Standard of Living Index" table).

In Lebanon, and in accordance with the cultural tradition, children usually keep on living with their parents (including brothers and sisters) until their marital commitment. Consequently, a visible majority of young adults stated living with their parents or brothers and sisters (69%). On the other hand, we note an important percentage of respondents who has been living in the same neighborhood for more than 20 years (43%) because in Lebanon, it is not very common to move houses or regions due to the strong family/community ties, as well as to the size of the country. Whereas young adults living alone (14%) are mostly university-students staying in school / university housing, or renting a room in nearby areas to their academic centers (12%).

*"Let me share with you a little project that I have done after the war in July 2006. The project that we worked on was "how do young Lebanese see Lebanon of today?" so I chose to talk about the diversity of the people living in my building (different backgrounds, religion, way of life, cultural... we have an Italian NGO, Filipinos, music school, cinema director, mayor,...) that reflects exactly how I see my Lebanon !!! A little bit of everything living under the same roof!" (F, 30-35).*

Since the majority of participants are graduates aging between 24-29 years old, and since 57% of participants are employed, and given that the greater part of the businesses / job opportunities are in the cities, the percentage of rural and village residents was low (10%) compared to 90% living in cities and towns. However, facing high living expenses (i.e. housing) in the cities, residents concentrate more on living in the suburbs of the cities (i.e. the small and medium towns).

In addition, a number of students have to work to help their parents cope with the increasing living expenses, household expenses and other fees (academic charges, transportation, outings, etc...). In fact, 36% of the students have a job in parallel to their studies. Among those working students, 50% of them have

a full-time position, among which 55% depend fully on their own salaries as a main income. However, among the total number of students participating in the survey, the majority depends on family assistance and only 25% of them depend on their salaries. For the majority of young professionals (81%), the main source of income is their salaries, compared to 9% who depend more on family assistance.

*"My motto in life is treating others the way you like to be treated... same applies to the environment, treat the environment and nature, the way you like it to treat you" (M, 24-29).*

Despite the unstable political situation and economical hardships faced in the country, it seems like young Lebanese are generally pretty happy (median of 7 in the life satisfaction table). This could mean that Lebanese have a relative positive outlook on life, and that their hopes let them persevere and survive.

*"I had and I have and I will always have a happy life, because I want to" (F, 18-23).*

However, several respondents did complain about not feeling very integrated in their communities, partly because of the mentality they do not share with the older generation, and partly because they feel like they do not have enough influence in their communities. A few respondents expressed a will to live abroad. Only a couple of respondents mentioned the environmental issues such as traffic, pollution, and the need for greener areas in the cities as factors of improvement.

*"My life looks like a man swimming in the sea and struggling with all his strength but yet he does not know where he goes, because the waves are stronger than him, but he has not yet lost the hope" (M, 24-29).*

In Lebanon, in spite of all the sudden cultural opening to the Western countries, the society kept its historical ethics and communitarian habits. For instance, it is interesting to note that a high percentage of people (63%) are still comfortable to have their neighbors watch their house even if only 33% of them consider their neighbors trustworthy.

*"In my community we are all like family, it's a city but have the ties of a little village, everyone knows everyone. I like that a lot. You can meet all the people you know in the street by chance and know their news with a little chit-chat" (M, 30-35).*

On the other hand, as explained earlier, the new generation does not really get along with the old generation in Lebanon due to their unaccustomed revolutionary ideas and actions. Therefore, some of the comments of the youngest respondents came refusing their neighborhood despite their agreement on its safety and solidarity.

*"I like to have less interference from the neighbors in our daily things" (F, 18-23)*

*"Neighbors are so bad, they are people which you cannot count on and you cannot be friend with" (M, 24-29).*

In addition, it is worth mentioning that, due to the aftermath of the consecutive wars throughout the years, Lebanese citizens faced displacements and immigration, leading especially at the new generation level, to a lack of belonging feelings to their communities.

## SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: A CONDENSED ANALYSIS

*"The meaning of sustainability is taking care of our surroundings and environment, thinking about the future in a more aware and conscience way, caring about the natural resources, in brief respecting what was given to us and taking care of it, not taking life for granted" (F, 24-29).*

### Environmental Awareness and Communicating Sustainability

It is noticeable that most of the participants, along with their parents, come from a business background (students 35.5%, young professionals 10%), whereas only 3.5% of the professional participants had studied environment or ecology. Among those who studied environment, only a few of them practice it in their career. On the other hand, among those who work in the environmental field, several had not studied the subject but got acquainted with it with practice. These figures are low and could be said to reflect a low level of interest in the subject. Business, medicine or engineering are still believed to be the best and most promising career paths - the environmental field is yet unpopular and not very much explored.

Noting that, the environmental field in Lebanon is still considered a newborn major/interest that had not been yet prioritized either through the legislative standpoint/the political viewpoint or even the society perspective. On the contrary, the environmental concept and its practices have and are still being

fought against by most of decision-makers and main national stakeholders due to its potential effect on their business interest.

*"Correct law reinforcement with clean environment" (M, 30-35).*

*"Very little can be done towards climate change because there are so many more immediate problems in my country (wars, political instability, etc...) making this problem appear in the eyes of society, as secondary. The new generations are much more sensitive about this but the leaders are considered as the only conscious and often are sources of its degeneration ... a vicious circle, isn't it?" (F, 24-29)*

People still judge the environmental supporter being mostly an enthusiastic volunteer rather than a money-earning professional careered.

*"...Approaching people in this society from an ecological perspective are not very convincing nor appealing to them. The environment and ecology is the least of their concerns" (M, 18-23).*

On the other hand, 19% of all participants said they were a member or participated in environmental or sustainable development organizations. Even though it is an overall small percentage, it remains a good sign that people from different sectors and fields are slowly taking conscience of the global environmental issues. This could result from the fact that, in the past decade at least, the problem has visibly affected their own grounds (i.e. important oil spill in 2006, decrease of rain water and green spaces, and rise of summer temperatures).

Fighting environmental degradation and pollution is ranked in the top 3<sup>rd</sup> position of most important priorities globally. This shows that the Lebanese do have an important concern about the environment when it comes to thinking globally, but on the national scale, other issues are more prioritized.

*".... Nothing is satisfying, I wish I could unplug and be green, sustain my life with low cost, free solar and wind power, local produce... it wasn't longtime ago when our parents were leading normal and healthy lifestyles, how did it get so bad, so fast?" (M, 30-35)*

As a matter of fact, Lebanon remains a third world country which has been through several wars and which still faces important political debates and conflicts, so its development was hindered tremendously. In this manner, importance and

concern were/are still given to "more immediate issues" resulting from the war (i.e. infrastructure deterioration, increasing poverty in affected areas, immigration, etc.), whereas scarcely anyone was considerate about the environment. While the other countries were way ahead in regulating environmental rules and practices, Lebanon was trying to recover and building again its damaged infrastructures (roads, sewage channels, waste treatment and management...). Additionally, the Lebanese society believes that its country is not contributing to the arising environmental problems as much as the developed countries because Lebanon is not a productive (industrial) country, but rather a consuming one.

Based on the above, we can understand why more than 2/3 of the respondents, some of whom were already aware of environmental challenges, said that nothing/not much can be changed in Lebanon in regards to the environment. This shows that even if people are aware of the problem, they act as if it is none of their responsibility.

*"We have no parks to hang out at, no free social gatherings, we are kept busy trying to survive the ever increasing cost of living, we don't even bother influencing political decisions anymore, we never make any difference anyways and we know we will always pay the price" (M, 30-35).*

*"We cannot change a thing in Lebanon... I already knew that we were going straight forward towards a disaster, thank you for reminding me" (M, 24-29).*

This, for them, justifies the |Do nothing scenario| because they don't believe in the capacity of such a small country to have a significant impact on the changing of things.

*"I can't do anything to make my way of living sustainable" (M, 18-23).*

For instance, during the current international financial crisis, the Lebanese did not change anything in their habits and expenses, truly believing that the crisis will not reach them and that what happens with others will not happen to them. Interestingly, only about 1/3 of participants believe that the information on climate change will modify their reactions to the scenarios because concern and awareness are very important. However, 76.3 % of respondents think that awareness about climate change could bring people to adopt new sustainable scenarios in their everyday life. And several among them insist that laws and regulations

should also be implemented to enforce the execution of needed measures.

*"Go back to nature; I am not sure how to let go all these technologies but I feel we need few things to be happy in life rather than having everything and have no time to enjoy life" (F, 24-29).*

*"The TV is always on, so is the desktop computer. The washing machine runs like 4 times a week (a couple of hours per cycle). We cook mainly using a gas stove and we use the microwave for heating" (M, 30-35).*

### Sustainability in everyday life perceptions and expectations for the future

In general, we note that few were those who really thought about the environment, health or other related topics as key improvements when describing their everyday life.

For the great majority of respondents, lifestyles have changed tremendously in the space of two generations because technology is making everything in the world move so much faster. Respondents believe their grandparents' life was better than theirs in the sense that they had stronger and more genuine community ties, they lived with less stress, had a better health (they mostly lived in rural areas and used to be farmers/shepherds), and were simple and modest people who were more easily satisfied with what they had. Nowadays however, with globalization, markets have become insecure, life is mostly about work and making more money; little time is left for leisure and social/cultural activities. Some respondents even complain they don't have enough time to stay fit and exercise. As a result, the majority of respondents are not so hopeful about a bright future, and several expect that everything will be more expensive.

*"Fight ignorance with education" (M, 30-35).*

An impressive number of respondents consider that sustainability is an important component when envisioning the "ideal future" - i.e. several wishes to live closer to nature, in more rural environments, and being more sustainable. For 5 respondents, the worst way of living would be to face a cataclysmic climate change.

### Housekeeping

Respondents are found to make heavy use of electrical appliances. When at home, the most popular and enjoyed activities are watching TV and using the computer to chat with friends or just surf the web (only two respondents enjoy gardening). Significant

levels of energy are thus consumed by each dwelling on a daily basis, without mentioning household equipment (fridge, washing machine). Additionally, the gas stove is used much more frequently than the electrical one for cooking, and the microwave is very common for heating food.

*"Energy management is unrealistic, people are raised to consume, the less we consume the more jobs will be lost, so it is a dream that can't be accomplished, and we human, we have moods, if we are sad or angry we will care less about the environment than our own needs and that means lighting every light bulb in our house if it makes us feel better" (M, 30-35).*

*"... I keep the hot water and heater on when I go out, I like to come back home and to feel it's warm and to directly be able to have a hot shower. My comfort is very important for me, but I think that I should change something about it" (F, 30-35).*

The most wished improvement in regards to living sustainably is using less electricity power. Only a couple of respondents would like to recycle more and use less plastic, and one person hoped to use a more environment-friendly heater.

*"I believe that energy management is a very important process and should be taught to developed as well as developing country inhabitants. Less energy consumption will lead to less demand and therefore more sustainability" (F, 24-29).*

The majority of participants appreciate the adoption of the energy management concept in their houses, mainly because it is easy to adapt, economically advantageous since the electricity bill in Lebanon is known to be quite high, and it would make people more aware of the daily quantity of energy they use. However, several people believe that the Lebanese are not ready to change their lifestyles because they usually look for maximum comfort, so the question of their adaptability to limited variety and customization remains a big uncertainty.

*"Energy management could be adopted. People care mostly about their pocket, so they will adopt it, since they will be saving money" (F, 24-29).*

*"It is somewhat easy, the way it is right now. Why would someone care about damages that would happen in a far away future?" (F, 24-29).*

Additionally, energy management in houses is considered by respondents as a 'quick' scenario, when



the public services in Lebanon are known not to be very effective. Suggested improvements refer to making the general public more informed about energy issues first, otherwise people would not spend money on an additional device; it isn't easy for everyone to think about long-term advantages.

The "Collective Laundry" scenario is not so welcomed since respondents are concerned about hygiene, and others are not ready to share something they consider of the utmost privacy. In addition, the architectural and urban structures of both buildings and areas in the country are not outfitted for laundry rooms.

*"If I would adopt collective laundry, most of the Lebanese families won't. We don't have electricity all day long; we arrange all our needs around the times when we know we have power on! So carrying loads to the basement and hauling them back home using the stairs, is not very practical" (M, 30-35).*

## Food

Many respondents believe that the food's quality used to be better because people cultivated their own fruits and vegetables (no chemicals were added, everything was organic). Nowadays however, people buy their food most commonly from supermarkets without knowing its source, and a lot of it is imported because people rely on international products for processed food. However, relatively good attention is given to buying local and in season, but organic products are not at to get.

*"We should plant, even if in small areas, it helps fulfilling families with fresh vegetables and helps in having more green in our cities" (F, 18-23).*

Only one wish to eat healthier food was expressed, and another person is looking for a faster way to eat healthier. In that respect, the majority of respondents recommend the implementation of "Urban Gardens" because they believe it will be a way to eat healthier products, and have greener areas in cities. However, a lot of them said they wouldn't have time to take up the activity because of their busy lives, or predicted that the Lebanese didn't have the interest or mentality to adopt it. Suggested improvements to be made were to use spaces like rooftops and balconies instead, and to inform the general public about how to produce organic fruits and vegetables.

*"The mixture between the urban and village life is much healthier and keep us close to the nature. Working in gardens reduces our daily stress" (M, 30-35).*

The Lebanese like to have the choice and availability of several different produces all year round, therefore they don't appreciate being stick to a "Vegetable Bag", as well as the Lebanese are probably not ready to go on a low-meat diet.

## Mobility

Public transportation in Lebanon is known to be rare and bad, and biking isn't possible because of the risk of getting killed and the topography of the land (hilly roads and long distances between towns and cities). And for most cases, walking is obviously not an option, so the great majority of respondents have their own car. Yet, they often complain about traffic, poor road conditions and bad driving, and they believe that pollution and noise are always increasing. Therefore, an important number of respondents are thinking about changing their means of transportation (but will they actually do it?), and many wish for better public ones.

*"There is no adequate public transport in Lebanon and practically everyone uses his own car to move around. I am one of them" (F, 30- 35).*

*"Unfortunately my country's road system is a nightmare, with potholes galore and chronic traffic jams that gnaw away a part of your daily life. Not to mention the maniacs on the road and the general foul mood amongst drivers...who could blame them? What this country really needs is a decent public transportation system, like a subway or a train. It used to have a railroad that ran the entire length of the coast, but that was a long time ago, at the time of my grandfathers, and it was abandoned when the automobile became king" (M, 24-29).*

As mentioned previously, a high percentage of professionals are living in the suburbs of the main cities, therefore, a high dependence on transportation is expected due to daily mobility of the professionals commuting to their work stations from towns to cities. However, public transportation in Lebanon is known to be rare and bad, and the infrastructure unsuitable for bicycles, so the majority of respondents have their own cars. The Lebanese are not used to sharing cars or car-pooling because of a question of mentality: people believe it is "un-cool" not to have their own vehicle, and claim that sharing isn't practical, and car-pooling disturbs one's privacy.

"Car-pooling on demand" turned out to be the preferred potential option among the respondents because they believe it is the most adaptable among the given choices, and because it causes less pollution

and traffic which has become terrible nowadays. Indeed, this strategy is also seen as advantageous because gas is expensive, and splitting the fuel charges will make everyone in the car happy. Some also view it as another way to socialize. However, most Lebanese aren't willing to car-pool with strangers (but only relatives and friends), and would still rather drive their own vehicle (matter of prestige and mentality).

The impossible alternative solution to the mobility crisis in Lebanon is the Bicycle Centre's concept, because, as stated before, bikes are not practical for long distances and due to unfavorable weather conditions and Lebanon doesn't have the needed infrastructure for it.

*"Bicycles in the burning sun or the freezing rain? I don't see it happening, and on the other hand we are greedy humans, we want the best, cars, then not any car but a Ferrari..." (M, 30-35).*

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that the consecutive wars and political conflicts in the country have greatly contributed in the delay and lack of the environmental regulations and laws even if some of the small-scale self initiatives of environmental practices started few years ago in the communities.

According to the results of the survey, a lot of effort and progress is yet to be made in regards to the environment and sustainability in Lebanon especially at the governmental level. Since national sustainability cannot be fulfilled without guidance, strategy, effort, budget and the enforcement of the government. For instance, being sustainable with regards to mobility needs the appropriate infrastructures (trains, public transportations, bicycle paths, etc...), and this cannot be possible without governmental prioritization, budget allocation and strategic implementation.

Noting that, the majority of respondents feels that dealing with individuals / private companies / NGOs to implement environmental practices rather than with the governmental bodies is much easier and quicker at this current political stage. Even with believing that adopting, for instance, energy management or car-sharing concepts would essentially need the government interference and support.

Despite all of what had been said previously regarding internal and regional political instability, it is worth mentioning that the Lebanese have created an

amazing way of facing problems and barriers, simply by being a "Life Lover."

*"... The bottom line is we only have Hope, it doesn't exist in Nature, you won't find no cat hoping to get fed, the cat will hunt or simply die, but as humans we have Hope, we invented it and accepted it as Fact" (M, 30-35).*

*In future I see myself working from home, living in a house that provides its own energy and leaves a small foot print. Working from home, reduces my fuel bill, reduces pollution and road rage, stress and car maintenance fees. I hope my country will devise plans to be sustainable and independent from the rest of the world" (M, 30-35).*

# Sustainable Lifestyles and Young Adults in Mexico

**Mexico: 1,342 participants**

Leticia Merino, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

## GENERAL FEATURES ABOUT THE COUNTRY

Mexico's has an area of 1,972,550 km<sup>2</sup>, shares a 3,141 km border with the United States of America, 871 km border with Guatemala and 251 km border with Belize. Mexico is one of the 18 mega-diverse countries of the world, with over 10-12% of the world's biodiversity<sup>15</sup>. It is the second country in eco-systems diversity and fourth in overall species. Through the last four decades this richness has been threatened by high deforestation rates mostly due to agricultural and life-stock expansion, often promoted by subsidies and other public policies. The lack of opportunities for livelihoods based on sustainable forest uses has been another driver of forest destruction as 60% of the rural land and 70% of the forests are communally owned<sup>16</sup>. During the last decade deforestation rates have lowered as a result of the massive rural out-migration. Environmental problems are also associated with unplanned and unsustainable urban growth; water bodies' pollution and exhaustion and air pollution.

Mexico is a federation with 31 states, divided into municipalities. It has a free market economy, being considered as an upper middle-income country. Mexican economy is strongly export-oriented, more than 90% of the country's trade happens under free trade agreements, and the most influential of them is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. In 2006, trade with these two countries accounted for 50% of Mexico's exports and 45% of its imports. In January 2009, 4.6% of the population was impoverished if measured by food based poverty and 15% was considered to be impoverished by asset based measurements<sup>17,18</sup>. Ongoing economic concerns include the economic dependence on the USA, low

real wages, underemployment, inequitable income distribution and poor opportunities for large groups. There are enormous gaps between the urban and the rural population, the northern, central, and southern states, the rich and the poor. The 2004 United Nations Human Development Index reported that some districts in Mexico City and the state of Nuevo León had a similar level of income, education and life expectancy to Germany, while the municipality of Metlatónoc in the state of Guerrero had an HDI similar to Syria<sup>19</sup>.

According to the latest official estimate Mexico has a population of 111 million people<sup>20</sup>. Population growth has drastically decreased from a peak of 3.5% per year in 1965 to 0.99% in 2005<sup>21</sup>. Life expectancy in 2006 was estimated to be at 75.4 years<sup>22</sup>. Population is increasingly urban with close to 75% living in cities<sup>23</sup> and large metropolitan. Migration patterns within the country show positive migration to north-western and south-eastern states, and a negative rate of migration for Mexico City. The national net migration rate is negative (-4.7/1000) due to the emigration to the United States<sup>24</sup>. During the last decade the remittances from Mexicans working in the USA became one of the main sources of foreign income, holding a key importance for many rural and urban poor households, remittances during 2009 shrunken by nearly 30%<sup>25</sup>.

Violence and insecurity are some of the strongest and most pervasive current challenges faced by Mexico, few Mexicans trust the police or the judicial system,

<sup>15</sup> Sistema de Información sobre la Biodiversidad de México. CONABIO 2007. [www.conabio.gob.mx](http://www.conabio.gob.mx)

<sup>16</sup> In many cases common forests have been degraded or removed, but all through the country there are also forest communities committed with sustainable forestry.

<sup>17</sup> Living on less than \$10,000 US dollars per year

<sup>18</sup> World Bank Report, The World Bank, 2007..

<sup>19</sup> UNDP, Mexico Report on HDI; United Nations 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Which makes Mexico the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world. Spanish Language History. Today Transitions; [www.todaytransitions.com/language-history/spanish-language-history](http://www.todaytransitions.com/language-history/spanish-language-history)

<sup>21</sup> INEGI, Tasa Global de Fecundidad 1976-2006, [www.inegi.bog.mx](http://www.inegi.bog.mx)

<sup>22</sup> Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística; Censo de Población y Vivienda 2005.

<sup>23</sup> INEGI, Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2000.

<sup>24</sup> "Estimations", Nacional Council for Population, CONAPO, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Slow Down Heats Mexican Remittances. September 2009; [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)

and therefore, most crimes remain unreported. Total crimes per capita average 12 per 1,000 people<sup>26</sup>, while Mexican drug cartels have as many foot soldiers as the Mexican army does.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The questionnaire was applied mostly in UNAM campuses in Mexico City. Female students were more willing to respond to the questionnaire than male students. In qualitative terms, the sample (N=1342) can be considered as representative of the middle class studying Mexican young adults (with low-medium and medium levels of standards of living).

**The majority of the (65%) respondents are very young women**, 84% of them in the age group 18 to 23 years, and 14% in the age group 24 to 29. They are a **largely urban population**: 90% live in a city and 69% in a big or a mega-city. 93% are students (14% are working students) and 7% are young professionals. The majority (84%) of these young adults **live with their parents**. Family assistance is the most important source of income (79%) only 15% of the students have a grant. **Only 17% of the respondents work**, 12% of them declared themselves as unemployed -including 40% of the young professionals - the majority of those employed work part time. The main fields of study are: "health and medicine" (16.7%), engineering-technology (11.5%) and law (10.5%). Based on the proposed classification, those studying environmental issues are only a very small minority (2.1%)<sup>27</sup>. **The socio-economic status of most of the respondents is low**: 80% declared that most of their income is spent satisfying basic needs: 47% of them declared that their main expenditure is "food and beverages", for 33% it is housing.

### Social life and perceptions of local areas

The interviewees as a whole have a "moderate" level of social capital, most of it is based in neighborhood relations and groups related to entertainment and sports; 64% of them are members of different types of organizations; 50% take participant in "youth, sports

<sup>26</sup> Mexican Crime Statistics 2008; www.nationmaster.com/country/mx-mexico/cricrime.

<sup>27</sup> Environmental studies are increasingly part of the curricula of studies of: biology, urban and rural planning, sociology/ anthropology, development studies and also political sciences and international relations.

clubs or outdoor activities clubs, cultural/musical/dance theater organizations"; 17% belong to religious organizations. Interestingly enough: 15% have taken part in "peace, humanitarian and community services and 12% in "environmental or sustainable development organizations". Most of these youngsters tend to live for long time in the same neighborhoods: 58% have lived in the same neighborhood for at least 15 years, but 21% have lived in the same area for less than four years. The perception of their localities is heterogeneous and somehow contradictory: 56% think that their neighborhood is friendly/pleasant, but 33% do not believe on the existence of solidarity and relations among residents and 51% do not think their neighbors trust each other; 33% of the people believe in the possibility to undertake joint action in case of need and influence public policies, but 35% think the opposite [xiii]. 79% ignore how their neighborhoods are managed, reflecting the centralized governance style prevailing in the country.

What respondents value about their localities is peace (21%) and closeness to activities and services (11%). They would like to change insecurity (17%) and poor relations with neighbors (16%). **The average value of the answers on life satisfaction is 7.9**, 78% of with values of 8 and more. High values are possibly related with the young age of the respondents, their access to some forms of social capital and the sense of having opportunities while having access to university studies. 20.1% have values lower than the average on life satisfaction.

## SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE PERCEPTIONS

Only a very small minority of these young adults have habits that express concerns on sustainability. *These concerns are absent in relation to housekeeping*, sustainability was mentioned as a *criterion to buy food* by only 3% of the respondents who purchase organic and recycled goods. Concerns about health are the most frequent drivers for this choice (31% of those interviewed are aware of the importance of eating fruits and vegetables). About 9% use *alternative ways of transportation based on sustainability and health concerns*.

### Some general data on everyday life show that:

- **Food choices** - 60% go to local markets to purchase their food, 39% buy food at supermarkets, 30% in local stores, and 3% go to wholesale markets.



- **Mobility** - Most of the respondents use different types of transportation. Public transport is the main choice, buses are used by 80% and subway by 68%; private cars by 23%, taxis by 3%; 19% often walk and 9% use bicycles.
- **Housekeeping** - 54% use electric appliances; 68% use computers, 71% watch television, 40% read books. 65% declared that their life is good.

**A temporal comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of present and past lifestyles shows that:** 20% think the quality of life –in terms of tranquility- was higher in the past, 10% declared that life has become more insecure. Another important group (24%) mentioned a wider gender gap as an important disadvantage of the past. **Elements explicitly related to sustainability in a temporal comparison of lifestyles:** More than 60% of these answers have no relation with any aspects related to sustainability. Some mentioned what they identify as "social aspects" of sustainability: better security (10%), rural life and/or a lifestyle closer to nature (4%), gender disparity (24%) more schooling (12%). It was repeatedly mentioned that uncertainty about the future affects sustainability perspectives.

## VISIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

**The most frequent problems:** *economic deprivation* as reflected in the everyday lives of families (17%) and *insecurity*.

- **Food.** Respondents identified the following as problems: the permanent rise in food prices (39%), the lack of control of the quality of food (13%) and chemical contents of many foods (10%).
- **Mobility:** Respondents identified the following problems: low quality of public transport (52%), traffic (40%), insecurity in public transports (15%), polluting public transport (9%), lack of bicycle paths and respect to cyclists (9%), long distances (8%) and lack of adequate transport for people with motor disabilities (2%).
- **Housekeeping:** Respondents noted the following as problems: *Lack* or malfunction and high costs of services such as water, electricity and internet (7%); 10% considered that there is a need for more security in many urban neighborhoods.

Other mentioned needs were: more free time, better quality of family relations, agreement of rules among condominium dwellers, low quality of TV programs, lack of leisure options, and lack of employment opportunities.

Environmental degradation was only mentioned by the 3% of the respondents and waste of energy and water by 2%. There were no proposals on how to overcome any of these problems.

**Most of the respondents (65%) have a positive vision of the future. Ideal ways of living include:** a steady job (68%), family (46%), a peaceful and secure life (52%), wealth and leisure (16%), 6% of would like to live in another country. Nearly 30% of responses show different degrees of uncertainty: the lack of a job (9%), insecurity (6%) lack of development (6%). They fear loneliness (10%), insecurity (9%), being economically dependent, face restriction to freedom, war, discrimination and to fall in drug addiction.

**Sustainability plays a marginal** role in the ideal image of life: only for 8% a clean environment is part of it, 4% want to live in a sustainable way, and 3% would like to have more conviviality. 6% fear they will have to live in a heavily polluted area, 9% are concerned about the future impacts of global warming, 2% fear water scarcity and 8% fear conflicts related to environmental crisis.

**There were no proposals on how to prevent these potential problems. Sustainability is not an expectation, nor a strong demand,** only the social aspects of sustainability, in particular the need to overcome the lack of insecurity and the lack of options for young people are felt as important needs.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND OTHER EXPLAINING FACTORS

The long stagnancy the economy of the country and income concentration has lead to scare opportunities for young adults, prolonged dependency from their families, and lack of investment in education and public services. The need to overcome the growing insecurity is felt as a priority in relation to sustainability. In addition low quality mass media and poor reading habits also play a role in the low environmental awareness and willingness to change lifestyles. Environmental sustainability only was given a third place in the list of global priorities.

## OPPORTUNITIES OF SUSTAINABLE SCENARIOS: SCENARIOS OVERVIEW

1. Food		Results %
"Quick" Scenarios	Vegetable bag	23.1
"Slow" Scenarios	Urban gardens	19.6
"Co-op" Scenarios	Family take-away	0.6
2. Mobility		Results %
"Quick" Scenarios	Car sharing	25.9
"Slow" Scenarios	Bicycle center	24.4
"Co-op" Scenarios	Car-pooling on demand	16.7
3. Housekeeping		Results %
"Quick" Scenarios	Energy management	14.4
"Slow" Scenarios	Urban composting	20.3
"Co-op" Scenarios	Collective laundry	22.2

### Food

The most promising scenario was the "vegetable bag", followed by "urban gardens". "Family take away" was the less preferred scenario.

The motivations given to promote the "vegetable bag scenario" were: a healthier diet and the support to small farmers. Motivations for the "urban gardens" scenario were: the joy to perform a manual activity, the contribution to the beauty of cities, to environmental quality and with family economy. This scenario was considered as a way to cope with possible food crisis. Motivations given for the support of the "family take-away" scenario include social solidarity, energy savings and better diets. **Suggested improvements:** for the "vegetable bag" scenario it was suggested to launch information campaigns about its benefits, to regulate and promote sustainable food production, to make this scenario economically (through governmental subsidies and price control). Information campaigns were also proposed as ways to favor "urban gardens", some recommended water re-use strategies prior to the establishment of these gardens. There were few suggestions on how to improve for the "family take-away" scenario, some mentioned information campaigns, and others the need to regulate organic and fair trade.

### Mobility

The most promising scenario was "car sharing", very closely followed by the "bicycle center", "car pooling on demand" was the third option.

The motivations to choose "car sharing" were: the reduction of air pollution (33%), the reduction of traffic (10%), other reasons were the collective use of resources and the reduction of transportation costs. Some people in large Mexican urban areas have already experience with *car sharing*. The motivations to opt for a "bicycle center" were also to reduce pollution, improve health and enjoy the pleasure of cycling. Other arguments were: lower living expenses and less traffic. A bicycle center works successfully since 2007 in the main campus of the National University (UNAM). The motivations given to opt for the "car pooling on demand" scenario were traffic reduction, increased social relationships, reduction of fuel consumption and cost savings. **Suggested improvements:** Only 25% of the respondents made suggestions on how to improve the "car sharing" scenario, mostly related to security. Other suggestions include information campaigns, the use renewable fuels and economic incentives. Half of the respondents who preferred the "bicycle center" scenario talked about the need of proper roads, and 20% mentioned the need to enforce strict traffic regulations. Other suggestions were safety measures, government des-incentives to car use, and incentives to the use of bicycles. A third of those who preferred the "car pooling on demand" scenario had suggestions on how to improve it such as membership of "car pooling" the groups, incentives and regulations, the use of renewable fuels and information campaigns.

### Housekeeping

The most promising scenario for housekeeping was "collective laundry", the second was "urban composting" and the third "energy management".

The main motivation for "collective laundry" was feasibility -due to the extended experience people in Mexico already have with this option-. Other frequent motivation is the savings in terms of water and electricity. The key motivation to choose *urban composting* was the contribution with the improvement of the environment and care of the landscape. The motivations given for the "energy management" scenario were: the need regulate energy consumption and the viability to do it. Less

than 20% of the respondents mentioned household savings, few considered global warming. **Suggested improvements:** Only 20% made suggestions on how to improve "*collective laundry*" the most frequent proposals were: regulations related to the use of biodegradable soaps, improved technology, reduced use of electricity and reduce waste water. On "*urban composting*" 25% mentioned the need of practical information campaigns, and 20% proposed neighborhood committees. Others suggested sanctions for non compliance with this initiative and monitoring by local governments. Less than 50% made suggestions on how to improve "*energy management*". Nearly 25% proposed information campaigns about current costs of energy consumption and their global consequences, 20% proposed penalties for those who consume more than a certain level of energy. Other proposals were: to prioritize environmentally friendly energy production, and participation of major industries in this type of initiatives.

**The actors involved to implement the food related scenarios:** 50% of the respondents proposed that the sole intervention of the government would be enough for the implementation of the "*vegetable bag*" scenario, for the other half of the respondents governmental intervention should be accompanied by individuals, civil society groups and enterprises. Two thirds of the respondents considered again that the sole intervention of the government was sufficient to implement "*urban gardens*" while for 25% this scenario requires mostly individual participation. More than 50% considered also the government as the most relevant actor for the implementation of the "*family take away*" scenario, the rest declared this should be mainly an individual initiative.

**The actors to be involved for mobility scenarios:** Over 80% considered that the federal government should be the key actor in the implementation of the "*car sharing*" scenario. Around 20% suggested that the government should act in collaboration with civil associations and the private sector. 90% of those who preferred the "*bicycle center*" considered that governmental intervention is necessary, but a joint initiative including also civil associations, private sector and mass media. 50% considered that the government's action is necessary to implement the "*car pooling on demand*" scenario, only 20% proposed the participation of individuals and civil groups.

**The actors to be involved in the implementation of the housekeeping scenarios:** Nearly half of the respondents considered the government as the key actor for the implementation of the "*collective laundry*" scenario (not making difference between central and local governments), 30% considered that individuals are the only actors that should be involved. About two thirds of the respondents proposed the government as the key actor for the implementation of "*urban composting*" scenario, but half of them referred to local governments. Co-participation was also a frequently proposed model: 30% of the responded proposed joint effort of local government and individuals and a 10% joint ventures of local governments with associations and enterprises. 75% of the respondents considered that the government is the central actor for the implementation of the "*energy management*" scenario. Only one fifth proposed the government could be the only actor, a similar proportion included joint action with individuals, 20% recognize the importance of the participation of local governments, and others also included the participation of actors such as associations, mass media and enterprises.

A shared feature of these answers is the high reliance on the government as an over-capable actor even for the implementation of the co-op scenarios in a context where successful cases of pure governmental environmental projects are very scarce. Most of the answers do not make an explicit distinction between central and local authorities, when they do they mostly tend to rely on the central government intervention, even for local problems and locally based scenarios (such as car sharing, urban composting, green gardens). The lack of proposals explicitly referred to municipalities talks about their limited capacities and the need of decentralization of environmental policies. International experiences show that policies committed with the change of lifestyles need to be based on institutions closer to their constituencies. The social experience on self-governance and implementation of civil society experiences on resource management is foreign to the experience of most of the young adults interviewed. Another remarkable gap –expressed in these answers– is the lack of collaboration (and social capital) between the private sector and civil society. It is also to be said that the climate of insecurity and that pervades social

life is inhibiting collective action based projects, and eroding pre-existent social capital.

The "slow" scenarios got the highest level of preferences with 38.4% of the answers but the "quick" scenarios got a very close level of acceptance (37.9%), the "co-op scenarios" got the 23.6% of the answers.

## THE UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABILITY

**The benefits of the "Food Scenarios" in terms of sustainability.** In the case of the "*vegetable bag*" scenario social aspects of sustainability were those mostly considered: support to small farmers and contribution to social equity. For the "*urban garden*" scenario the benefits mentioned were the improvement of urban environmental and the arousal of environmental awareness. It was said that the "*family take away*" scenario could contribute to sustainability through the development of social networks, energy savings and the creation of new jobs.

**The understood benefits of the "mobility scenarios" in terms of sustainability** as given by 75% of the respondents who preferred "*car sharing*" were: less pollution, fuel savings and conviviality. The reasons of 75% of the respondents who opted for "*bicycle centers*" were: reduction of air pollutants, reduction of the use of non renewable fuels, and respect collective use of goods. The arguments given to support the "*car pooling on demand*" scenario were: reduction of fuel consumption and traffic, savings, and the creation of a context favorable to social relationships.

**The understood benefits of the "housekeeping scenarios" in terms of sustainability** for a third of those who preferred *collective laundry* were: a lower use of water and electricity, 20% mentioned the gains in terms of a climate of collaboration and environmental awareness. Almost half of the respondents who choose *urban composting* consider the maintenance and potential expansion of green areas as the main gain of this scenario, 25% valued the production of organic fertilizer. Smaller groups talked about the value of collective action, reduction of soils contamination and environmental awareness. More than half of the respondents who preferred the "*energy regulation*" scenario considered that its main benefits could be the reduction of electricity consumption, and the awareness of the environmental impacts of daily consumption patterns.

**Sustainability is mostly regarded as an ideal benefit, not as a strong motivation result from a**

**clearly perceived need or problem.** The perception of environmental scarcity or risk among these young adults is low, and lower when compared to the perception of problems related to poverty and insecurity. For these youngsters social aspects of sustainability (such as access to employment and productive opportunities, reduction of cost of living, access to public services) appear to be the most important components. Themes related to environmental governability such as democratic environmental governance, social participation, and environmental justice are much less regarded as important aspects of sustainable lifestyles.

## THE DEMAND FOR INFORMATION ON SUSTAINABILITY

About 58% of the respondents declared that they already knew the information on global climate change given by the survey, though many also added that this information had complemented previous notions. Approximately 42% of respondents considered that this information influenced them because it included practical ways to address environmental problems. Other comments were: people are generally indifferent towards environment, and coercive measures should be taken by governments, who on their turn do not prioritize environmental problems; the environmental problems and scarce resources of poor countries urban areas; the need to build agreements between different stakeholders.

**The majority (76.5%)** of the respondents considered that widespread awareness of climate change is a necessary base of practical actions to counter its effects. Others proposed a wide dissemination of information on the impacts of climate change on daily lives of people and the ways everyday sustainable practices help to mitigate global warming impacts. About **23.5%** agreed with the idea that in a country with serious social and educational deficits, environmental problems are not perceived as priorities. Information campaigns are important but not enough to create environmental awareness. The role of mass media was also mentioned by respondents.

## UNDERSTANDING AND DISCOURSE ON SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability was defined as composed by different type of elements (social, environmental and economic). Different ways of understanding sustainability were also expressed. **40%** of the respondents understand sustainability in terms of



optimizing the use of natural resources and limiting pollution, and **10%** as care for the environment. **20%** underlined the satisfaction of basic needs as requirements for sustainability. **8%** declared that they did not have a definition or understanding of the theme. **The values expressed in these definitions were:** environmental awareness, balance and harmony, responsibility, participation and respect. **The most frequent key words were:** awareness, planet, care, environmental conditions, health, responsibility, participation and respect. 20% of the respondents declared they are willing to use less electricity –mainly by using efficient bulbs– in order to favor sustainability; 17% declared they want to learn more about sustainability and are also willing to inform others; 17% accept to separate different types of garbage, compost and recycle; 7% agree to change their modes of transport, mainly by sharing their cars and using more public transportation; 7% are willing to save water and look for re-use systems; 9% would like to seek more local coordination; 15% want to buy organic and bio-degradable products, avoid products that damage the ozone layer, take care of green areas and purchase products of local producers.

## LAST CONSIDERATIONS

The responses to the questionnaire clearly show that the concerns and proposals about sustainability are embedded in wider socio-economic, political and cultural context. This context influences environmental perceptions, beliefs, and the proposals considered possible or desirable. Policies should consider social and cultural conditions of their subjects, as well as the constraints and opportunities they create. Social networks of young adults, such as clubs, neighborhoods, and Universities –UNAM in particular– can become social platforms where new proposals, experiences and information campaigns can be launched and developed. Even if the environmental values of these young adults are low, their responses express willingness to change trying environmentally friendly options. Learning and changing “by doing” should be a preferred way to modify attitudes and values in favor of the environment. UNAM has a privileged position for the development and support of alternative scenarios through the transformation of UNAM campuses in places run with sustainable criteria, where sustainable options are nurtured and disseminated. The active involvement of universities and social networks in the development of sustainable scenarios may enable young adults to be aware of their own potential, responsibilities and rights in these tasks. This new conscience would certainly contribute

to the arousal of an “environmental citizenship” opposed to the dependent attitude frequent in the answers to the questionnaire and needed to today overcome environmental challenges. This change of “micro-political” attitude may also enable young adults to more clearly identify the level of government needed to construct “co-management” schemes. Through this change other relevant partnerships could be developed such as the cooperation between mass-media, private sector and the civil efforts committed with local sustainability and sustainable development.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ayari Pasquier and Simone Buratti were responsible of the data base and statistical analysis for this paper.

# Flourishing: Young Lives Well Lived in New Zealand

## New Zealand: 132 participants

Bronwyn Hayward, Holly Donald, Erina Okeroa

Corresponding author: Bronwyn Hayward

RESOLVE, University of Surrey UK and Political Science, University of Canterbury, NZ

The New Zealand GSSL survey results provide a snapshot of lives well lived. The majority of respondents were relaxed, optimistic and confident about their future. Their reports of a high quality of life are in keeping with general surveys of the New Zealand population (OECD, 2009). These young respondents had a well developed sense of what the good life means for them and were hopeful that their dreams, including a job, an active outdoors lifestyle, finding a partner and/or having children are possible. However the results also point to some tension. For many, their ideal way of living means living self sufficiently or retreating to the country to provide for their own needs. Can the nation support the transport and land conversion implications of these lifestyle choices if this trend proves widespread? The results also offer glimpses into other problems: particularly poorly insulated student housing and a culture of youth binge drinking. This survey did not ask about the ethnic identity of respondents so the results cannot consider the implications of the sharp national disparities in health and well being between, for example, Pacific and Maori communities and the wider population. However the results of the survey provide a challenge for policy makers and the community which is to ensure that the opportunities to flourish which these respondents report enjoying, are available to all New Zealand's young people in the future.

## SETTING THE SCENE

As a small nation of 4.3 million people, New Zealanders pride themselves on the quality of their lifestyle and environment. In general, New Zealanders report high life satisfaction, currently ranking 6th out of 30 countries in the OECD, despite comparatively low per capita incomes, which place the country in the bottom third for net national incomes (OECD 2009). However there are significant ethnic disparities in health and well being amongst New Zealanders (Towns and Watkins, 2004; Rumball-Smith, 2009). New Zealand also has the highest youth suicide rate of all OECD nations (OECD 2009). Periods of economic recession and rising income inequality have influenced this high rate. Young, indigenous Maori men aged 15-35 years living in

deprived areas are particularly at risk (Ministry of Health 2009; OECD 2009; Howden-Chapman et al 2005).<sup>28</sup>

New Zealand's environmental indicators are also mixed. The nation relies significantly on renewable, hydro electricity and its economy remains largely based on tourism and the export of primary products. In the last 10 years however there has been a marked shift away from lamb and wool production towards dairy, mining and forestry. This shift has attracted criticism for associated land use changes which have resulted in increased discharge of nitrogen into major waterways, intensive irrigation and increasing green house gas emissions (the latter is also associated with rising rates of private transport) (Barnett and Pauling 2005).

We can consider the responses of young New Zealanders who replied to the GSSL survey against this changing national profile. The sample of 132 respondents is small and results can therefore only be treated as indicative. While it was not possible to determine the ethnicity of the respondents, the sample was well balanced by age; the largest cohort group was aged 18-23 years (45%) and the next largest group was 24-29 year olds (30%). About 55% were students, 37% were 'young professionals' and 5% were unemployed. Women comprised 58% of respondents. The survey was promoted through political science email distribution lists at the Universities of Canterbury and Otago, the two largest universities in New Zealand's South Island,<sup>29</sup> and social networking sites. Given the absence of large cities in the South Island, (Auckland, in the North Island is the only city with over one million residents), it is unsurprising respondents lived in cities of fewer than 400,000. Students were enrolled in a range of courses; the largest group of students was studying political science or international relations (24%).

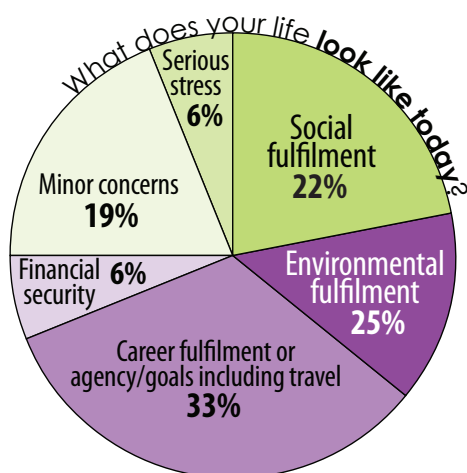
<sup>28</sup> The Maori suicide rate of 16.1 per 100,000 population is twice the rate of non-Maori and male suicide rates are 3.6 times higher than those of women (statistics supplied by the Ministry of Health, 2009; see also OECD 2009)

<sup>29</sup> 48% were contacted by the University of Canterbury, 30% by the University of Otago and 2% by Lincoln University, NGO's (4%), workplaces (4%), family or friends (6%), and Facebook (6%).

The transient nature of student lifestyles meant most had lived for less than four years in their community but 59% would be comfortable or very comfortable asking neighbours to look after their property. This group was also politically confident, 61% agreed or very strongly agreed that they were well informed about how their neighbourhood was managed. New Zealanders traditionally place high value on home ownership and independence. Living away from home for university study is common, as is an 'OE' (or overseas experience), travel after study. These trends are reflected in this sample: only 11% of respondents lived with their parents. A further 38% shared a house with other students or friends, while 32% lived with a partner and/or with children. The respondents came from affluent backgrounds but not markedly so: 44% of all students reported one parent in a 'profession' (predominantly teaching, research, engineering or medicine) while 14% of students' parents were unskilled or semi skilled workers. In keeping with the national profile, this sample ranked their life satisfaction highly (with a median of eight out of a possible 10).

### THE RESPONDENTS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES

Of the respondents who introduced themselves 'to a friend they had not seen for a long time' (n=100), 75% had nothing negative to say about their current lives, making only positive or very positive comments. Of those who expressed negative comments, few concerns were expressed with any intensity. Just six people raised significant concerns of social isolation, financial strain or personal problems. The overriding impression was of a cohort of young people who reported living well. While there was inevitably some overlap, the positive comments could be separated into clusters depending on the emphasis that each respondent gave to the reasons for their sense of fulfilment (figure and the illustrative quotes).



<b>Social fulfilment</b>	"I am at University in Dunedin and absolutely love it. I'm doing a Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching. I live in a hall of residence with 161 other people" (F, 18-23).
<b>Environmental fulfilment</b>	"lush ....living in a beautiful place with good friends and common interests views ...a great place to raise children in...have been riding bike to beach, swimming in rivers, have large veggie garden....and good job / life balance .....blessed" (F, 30-35).
<b>Career/ sense of agency/ goals including travel</b>	"My life today is great because I have freedom, I am independent and am achieving well at University. I live a healthy balanced lifestyle, I have hopes and dreams of travelling and being successful as a Principal of a school one day in the future where I will help the less fortunate kids to achieve, excel and change their way of life by being a positive and encouraging role model! (F, 18-23).
<b>Financial security</b>	Great job, enjoy it, makes a difference in peoples' lives. Great relationship, love my partner a lot. Family all healthy and happy. Good financial security. Looking forward to plans I have in the future" (M, 18-23).
<b>Minor concerns</b>	"Could be worse, I'm a poor student that can't afford his dental care but I've got a nice home and am getting a quality education" (M, 18-23).
<b>Serious stress or concern</b>	I'm working in a full-time reasonably paid and relatively secure job that I usually enjoy. I live in a nice flat in an awesome location right on the sea and close to the town centre. I have enough friends to keep my social life as full as I want it to be while having plenty of time to myself which I'm ok about. Except that I don't have a partner and haven't for a long time and this makes me lonely and unhappy a lot of the time" (F, 30-35).

## COMPARING YOUNG LIVES TO THOSE OF THEIR GRANDPARENTS

In comparison with many countries, it is striking that amongst the New Zealand respondents who compared their life with their grandparents (n=89), only a small minority (15%) thought their grandparents had a better quality of life than their own ('simpler', 'more community orientated' with 'better values'). Another 10% thought their grandparents had lives that were similar to their lives today while 8% said it was too difficult to compare.

*"They lived a sheltered, crippling life. Not getting out there and experiencing the wonders of the world. To them getting married and having lots of babies was the dream. They never really allowed themselves to do what they wanted as there was always an excuse or an obstacle in the road" (F, 18-23).*

*"Hugely different; my grandparents escaped the war in Europe. Much tougher- Slower communication, transport etc" (M, 18-23).*

*"My grandparents are from a small village in a developing nation. They didn't have electricity when they were young. No running water for a shower in the morning, just a well and a pump. They would've had a mud-brick kitchen with clay pots and open fires. Cars were rare, so they would have cycled and walked everywhere, or taken the train for long journeys. They would also have the fresh, organic food because there was no intensive production. Fresh fish would have been caught straight from the sea that morning and brought to their door. Fruit would be fruit from the market or that they'd picked from their orchard. But preparing meals would take a lot more work and take much longer" (F, 30-35).*

The remaining respondents (66%) thought their grandparents' lives were more difficult than their own because they had to 'work hard', lacked technology which compounded isolation, faced more social constraint (especially for women), had fewer educational opportunities and less material security (see text box one). Confidence that their grandparents' lives were worse than their own is surprising given that the grandparents of many respondents would have had access to social welfare benefits no longer available to this cohort including a low cost government home loan scheme and free state tertiary education.

## MOBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERYDAY LIVES

Of the 92 respondents who responded to questions about how they get around, the largest cluster

cited the car as their first preference for transport, taking pleasure in the 'freedom', 'independence', and 'convenience' of a car (38%). The second largest group (32%) mentioned walking first. However amongst walkers, nearly two thirds said they also used a car on wet days, weekends and holidays because public transport was poor, unreliable, and expensive. 19% nominated a bicycle as their first preference for transport although 9% of the sample overall commented that there were not enough separate cycle lanes. The bus was nominated by 8%. A small group mentioned skateboarding as alternative forms of transport to lectures and around town. 12% took air flights for holidays. Just under half (49%) of all respondents, (including car drivers), said what they enjoyed most about their mobility was being 'outdoors' and/or 'getting fit' in good weather.

Of the 32 respondents who went on to discuss mobility scenarios, the bicycle centre was the favourite option for 14 respondents. However over half of these respondents said they would not use such a centre themselves because the distances were easy to walk or they had their own bike already, or poor weather, and lack of cycle ways discouraged them. Car sharing was the first choice for 13 respondents but eight said they would not use this scenario in reality because it did not provide flexibility in New Zealand's dispersed and small cities. Respondents thought the key players involved in implementing a cycle scheme should be the local council, businesses, residents, schools, cycle retailers and universities.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF EVERYDAY FOOD CHOICES

Of the 61 respondents who discussed everyday food choices, almost all respondents shopped regularly at the supermarket and said that price and food quality were their most significant concerns. However a significant minority (34%) reported also making supplementary purchases from local shops and markets. When asked what they most enjoyed about their food experiences the largest cluster of respondents (24%) said there was nothing they enjoyed about shopping for food. The second largest cluster spoke with pleasure about finding affordable, quality food for cooking (12%). Another group took pleasure in local market shopping speaking explicitly about sustainable, fair trade or organic choices (also 12%). For 14% food shopping was a social experience to meet people and/or a trip or event. A small cluster of 4% enjoyed searching for new brands and reading food labels carefully. People objected to the costs of food, especially organic foods



and crowded supermarkets and said they would prefer more food choices. Interestingly many people enjoyed incorporating food shopping with an active outdoors lifestyle, for example 48% of all respondents mentioned enjoying buying locally produced food in farmers markets or local shops when these could be easily accessed.

*"I don't like shopping, it is just not my thing. I would rather go biking, running or playing soccer" (F, 24-29).*

*"Each week we have a budget of NZ\$150 so we try to buy nice food but have to stick to our budget. Purchases from local markets and vegetable stores, dairies and butchers" (M, 18-23).*

*"I love having a full fridge and cupboards after a big shop" (F, 18-23).*

*"I love going to markets for delicious treats. I enjoy going to a veggie market on a Sunday morning after a run" (F, 24-29).*

Across the sample the one jarring note about food and drink was made by 6% who commented on the issues of youth drinking: *'a very friendly neighbourhood where everyone is a student. However there is a real binge drinking culture in our country and so people can often get destructive of property' (M, 18-23).*

The most preferred food scenario was the urban garden selected by 22 of 45 people. The second choice was the vegetable bag selected by 14 people. As we might expect, the common reasons for selecting urban gardens were because people were already familiar with the idea, as many had gardens and valued growing local fresh food. However half of the people who selected this scenario were unsure if they really would implement it in reality. Some said they accidentally clicked on this option (suggesting survey fatigue), others said they objected to the other scenarios (suggesting some resistance to the choices) while the remainder said they had a preference for owning their own land and gardens.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF HOME LIFE

Amongst the 77 respondents' who discussed their home life, the most significant comment was the coldness and lack of insulation of many young people's homes: 20% of respondents reported they felt they needed better insulation or heating, or help with energy costs in their homes. The survey was undertaken in winter but these results reflect wider concerns about poor insulation of New Zealand homes, especially rental accommodation. Few respondents nominated any other changes. Amongst respondents who commented

on home appliance use, 41% said their computer or laptop was the appliance they used most often in the home, followed by the television and kitchen/laundry equipment (the oven, refrigerator and washing machine). However only 9% said that being online was their favourite activity at home. Most preferred cooking (20%) and watching television (20%) or reading books (15%). A relatively small number of respondents (n=35) answered the scenario questions about home-life. The scenario preferred by the majority was energy management (n=16). This choice is understandable in light of the concerns volunteered spontaneously in household discussion earlier about cold homes - however the scenario did not specifically address insulation and the difficulty of keeping warm in cold houses. One respondent when asked if she would adopt the energy management scheme commented:

*'Probably not. We currently have a pre-paid power system in our house, so we keep track of how much energy we use. But at the end of the day I will still keep the heat pump on to keep warm rather than go cold to save power' (F, 24-29).*

Only four of the 16 people had any reservations about adopting the energy management scenario. The main reasons for adopting this scenario were to reduce energy costs and familiarity with this type of scheme. Local energy companies and the government were seen as the main actors in this process. Urban composting was the second home life option preferred by 12 respondents; however five said in reality they would not adopt the idea because they already had a compost or because it was unappealing and logistically difficult in New Zealand's widespread suburbs.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF 10 YEAR PLANS: "Hopeful, settled and content"

Amongst the 85 respondents who talked about their plans for their lifestyles in 10 years time the largest cluster of 41% spoke of finding a job and living with a partner and feeling content (within this group 57% mentioned raising children). It was striking that this cluster rarely specified the nature of their 'job' other than to say they hoped it was 'interesting or rewarding'. They talked more extensively about raising children or their future activities, most of which involved the outdoors.

*'Hopefully married with children. Being a mother, and maybe working part time while bringing up the children as a priority. Would hope that we are financially secure and feel settled and content. Everyday life will no doubt be very busy but hopefully rewarding' (F, 18-23).*

The next largest group of 21% said they felt their lives would be much the same and expressed contentment: *'as beautiful as it is now'* (F, 18-23).

An additional 14% indicated they did not know or resented being asked to plan their future, with most indicating they were living well now and/or preferred not to think ahead, while 12% expressed the hope they would be living according to environmental or spiritual values. A group of 8% expressed concern that their lives in the next 10 years might experience greater environmental deterioration or more time pressure while the remaining 7% hoped to travel and work overseas.

## IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Amongst the 77 people who discussed their *ideal* way of living long term, five visions for living were identified. While again there was some overlap, the largest cluster (60%) wanted to live sustainably and with some self sufficiency, by, for example, producing their own food or energy and enjoying the outdoors, small towns and rural communities, for example: *'Completely self sustained and eco friendly by the sea and forest, river setting.'* (Female 18 – 23). In addition, 23% of respondents wanted financial security to live well, with many specifically commenting they sought a house or job not as an end in itself but as a means to get 'outdoors' or enjoy relationships and the pleasant environment, for example:

*"Enough money not to worry about money stopping me doing things- which again is more about attitude than money. Living a life that helps others materially and spiritually. A reasonably nice house, but not too big lots of opportunities to talk about ideas with others"* (F, 18–23)

An additional 8% wanted to continue to travel and 9% to live according to their values, for example:

*"Having all that I need. Being able to live by the values that give purpose to life. In a world where people are not treated as objects or things, but as that which is capable of their own creative and responsible living"* (M, 24–29).

## YEARS FOR THE FUTURE: APARTMENT LIVING AND LOSS OF THE DREAM

Of the 77 respondents' who responded to the question of, 'what would be the worst way of living for you?' the single fear volunteered by the largest group (34%) was of apartment living with a consequent loss of outdoor lifestyle and access to open space:

*"I would hate to live in a big city in an apartment, totally reliant on modern technologies with limited access to outdoor pursuits"* (F, 30–35).

The second biggest group of 28% feared loss of control, agency, life purpose or unfulfilling work, for example:

*'I think the worst way of living would be in a situation where I am passionate about making changes but not in the position to'* (F, 18-23) or *'factory worker in mainland China'* (M, 18-23).

Others (16%) feared financial insecurity or homelessness; *'The Worst... being homeless'* (F, 18–23), while 12 % feared social isolation:

*'Far from my family, too busy to make friends, surrounded by buildings & people, no green spaces/ blue skies'* (F, 18– 23).

The remainder feared physical or political insecurity, *"Subsistence farming in a warzone"* (M, 30–35), or could not comment.

## TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

The respondents were asked to talk about sustainability in their own words. Of the 37 respondents who commented on the adequacy of information provided about climate change, no one felt it changed their views although four felt it reinforced their attitudes. Few disagreed with the information because they felt it was inadequate or unconvincing (n=4). Clearly this sample did not feel it needed more information.

Asked what makes a sustainable life, 34 respondents offered three related but competing definitions. A distinctive definition offered by 10 people was that sustainability meant living 'self reliantly', in terms of providing for your own needs. This self reliance may reflect the island isolation that frames New Zealand's environmental experiences:

*"Having a truly sustainable way of living would be the ability to survive on the land alone - having either the option or ability to get food from the nature around you"* (F, 18–23).

For other respondents (n=14), sustainability was less about self reliance and more about minimising harm for others or the planet now and in the future:

*"Living in a way that doesn't leave a big footprint- that is, my way of living doesn't impinge on future"*

*generations or restrict their favoured way of living”  
(F, 18–23).*

The remainder thought sustainability involved either ‘reducing, reusing and recycling’ or making very significant attitude shifts.

Finally respondents were asked what immediate steps they thought should be taken to achieve sustainability. Of the 32 respondents who replied, just under half (n=15) nominated a combination of lifestyle changes involving using their car less, and growing food and developing a garden. A further eight people specifically said they wanted to insulate their homes or switch to solar energy. Three people said they would recycle and two said they did not believe they could live more sustainably as individuals than they were already living.

## CONCLUSION

Overall the majority of this sample reported living well and highly valued their outdoor lifestyle. For these relaxed and optimistic respondents, their greatest fear was to be trapped in ‘apartment living’ in a city or to lose their ability to live their dream. One challenge from these results is to engage a comparatively complacent community who feel that they already live well, with wider global environmental concerns. A small but significant group noted problems of binge drinking amongst students. A significant 20% commented on cold, poorly insulated student housing. Most significantly perhaps, in this sample we could not identify the ethnicity of respondents. Given the disparity of health and well being outcomes amongst some of New Zealand’s ethnic communities, this survey presents both an opportunity to consider the conditions which have enabled these respondents to live well, and a challenge to ensure all New Zealand’s young people have similar opportunities to flourish in the future.

## REFERENCES

- Barnett, J., and Pauling, J. 2005. The environmental effects of New Zealand’s free-market reforms. *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 7(2):271–289.
- Howden-Chapman P. and Hales, S. 2005. *The Impact of Economic Recession on Youth Suicide: A comparison of New Zealand and Finland Report 4: Social Explanations for Suicide in New Zealand*, Wellington: Ministry of Health

- Ministry of Health. 2009. *Suicide Facts: Deaths and intentional self-harm hospitalisations 2007*. Wellington: Ministry of Health. URL [http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/Files/suicide/\\$file/suicidefacts2007-16dec.pdf](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/Files/suicide/$file/suicidefacts2007-16dec.pdf) (accessed 12 January 2010)
- OECD 2009. *Society at a Glance 2009 - OECD Social Indicators* <[www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/SAG](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/SAG)> (accessed 12 January 2010)
- Towns, Cindy and Watkins, Nathan et al. (2004). “The Orewa Speech: Another threat to Maori health?” *New Zealand Medical Journal* 117(1205).
- Rumball-Smith, J. (2009). “Not in my hospital? Ethnic disparities in quality of hospital care in New Zealand: a narrative review of the evidence.” *New Zealand Medical Journal* 122(1297).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Corresponding author:** Bronwyn Hayward - Bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.uk

**Affiliations:** 1,2,3 School of Political Science University Canterbury, Christchurch New Zealand; 5 Political Studies University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

The authors would also like to thank Marjolein Righarts, Lindsey Te Ata o Tu MacDonald and Amanda Thomas for comment and research assistance.

## North America (Canada & the United States of America): Sustainable Lifestyles and Young Adults in the New York, Montréal and Halifax Metropolitan Areas

### 399 Participants

Solange Tremblay, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Public Communication, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Canada

Guy Lachapelle, Professor, Department of Political Science, Concordia University, Canada

### NEW YORK, MONTRÉAL AND HALIFAX – THREE CITIES, THREE CULTURES, THREE WAYS OF LIVING

When the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) invited us to participate in the Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL) and compare the attitudes of young people from North America regarding sustainable development, we wondered whether young people living in New York, Montréal and Halifax would have common attitudes and values. We knew that the young people living in these three cities would not be representative of all young people living in the United States and Canada. Life in North-East America and in Canadian East regions is definitely different from what can be experienced in the Mid-West or on the Western coast. Results collected in Canada are from both Anglophone (Halifax, Nova Scotia) and Francophone (Montréal, Québec) regions.

Culturally speaking, these three cities' history is fascinating and each of them reflects the evolution of British, French and European presence in North America pretty well. New York is modeled on the American melting pot, since most young people living there are often originally from other American States or other countries in the world. Montréal is a francophone city that is strongly shaped by an intercultural model in which the francophone majority had to adapt during the last decades to the arrival of new immigrants. Halifax, in a way, reflects Canadian values. With 19 million inhabitants living in New York, 3.75 million in Montréal and 394000 in Halifax, these three cities represent the archetypal megacity, middle size city and town. For these reasons, comparing the way young people live in these three areas is very interesting.

Since the ratification of the Canada – United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1989, which became the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the participation of Mexico in 1992, trade relations have intensified from both sides of the border despite waning since the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 events. Halifax and Montréal are the two main harbors of East Canada, where numerous containers convey in transit to New York. At the political level, meetings between the governors of the Eastern regions of the United States and prime ministers of Eastern Canada have been increasing, progressively shaping a real North American culture. The American nature of Canadians, Quebecois and Americans has helped the emergence of common values and of a common understanding of responsibilities regarding the environment, energy and economic development. As an example, the Administration of Barack Obama as well as political and economic elites of Montréal are now considering the development of hydro energy networks and a high speed train to connect Montréal and New York in the short term.

There are some differences in terms of what is being done regarding sustainable development. In Québec, the *Sustainable Development Law* was adopted on 16 April 2006, recognizing the interconnectedness of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development. In January 2008, Québec's Government Strategy on Sustainable Development for 2008-2013 entered into force with the objective of supporting governmental institutions in the implementation of the law in cooperation with the population. A few months later, the Government of Canada adopted the Federal Sustainable Development Act (June 2008). On the American side, on the eve of the Copenhagen negotiations in 2009, President Barack Obama changed directions regarding climate change and sustainability issues, heading towards a greener economy.



## METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The respondents come from the three regions of North-East America that are anchored in the urban areas of Montréal (Québec, Canada), Halifax (Nova Scotia, Canada) and New York (New York, United States). Four universities participated in this survey: Université du Québec à Montréal - UQAM (Montréal), Concordia University (Montréal), Dalhousie University (Halifax) and Fordham University (New York). Questionnaires were distributed electronically (via email) and no specific information about environmental or sustainability issues as related to the survey was provided beforehand. In Montréal, the two universities that participated in the survey created a random list of participants, ensuring a good mix of genders, levels and disciplines of studies. As a means of not distorting the results, it was important not to focus specifically on young adults studying environmental issues or sustainable development without excluding them<sup>30</sup>. Once respondents who did not fit the age group targeted were taken out of the sample, 399 questionnaires remained with the following distribution: Montréal, 178; Halifax, 95; and New York, 126.

## EVERYDAY LIFE

### Young people living with comfort

The questions regarding housing reveals that 41% and 35% live with friends in New York and Halifax areas respectively and 37% and 34% in the same regions live with their parents. According to the Canadian 2006 Census, living in the parental home is a trend following an overall upward in Canada, which could reflect reasons such as school attendance, financial difficulties, lack of job opportunities, cost of living in a particular area, a break-up in a relationship, and so forth.: "In 2006, 43.5% of (of the 4.0 million) young adults lived at home, up substantially from 32.1% two decades earlier."<sup>31</sup> Over half of the respondents (53%) depend economically on family assistance, 47% need a salary and 32% a loan: more specifically, 66% depend economically on family assistance in the New York area, 62% need a salary in Montréal and 41% depend on a loan in Halifax. Since 95% of respondents are students and rely on family assistance as their main source of income, a full

time job is declared by only 16% of the respondents, while 45% have a part time job.

Generally, housing (60%) and food (almost 40%) represent the most important expenditure among respondents. However, this result is strongly influenced by what was observed in Montréal (more than 75% and 50%), which is significantly different from what is observed in the two other regions. In Halifax, housing is clearly the most important expenditure, either at first rank (50%) or second rank (34%). In New York, health and education come first (43%) when housing is ranked as the second most important expenditure (38%) and food being far behind (29%). Given that housing is the most important expenditure of households in New York, 10% higher than in the two other regions, one should be surprised by the results obtained among young respondents from this city. However, these results can be explained by the fact that in terms of income, two out of three respondents in the New York region benefit from family support when it is less than half of them in the two other regions (Montréal and Halifax). In general, it can be said that respondents have a satisfying standard of living.

### Involved in their community

Young respondents from the three cities are particularly involved in their community: less than 15% say they are not interested in any of the activities mentioned in the survey.<sup>32</sup> Hence, more than two thirds (67%) participate in sport, leisure or cultural activities. Around 44% of participants say they are involved or have been involved in peace and human rights issues – more than a majority in the New York region (53%). Interestingly, environmental and sustainable development organizations stand at the third rank among organizations in which young people are involved with, at 21%, but this proportion increases to 33% in the Halifax region, where more than 10% of respondents have studied environment (less than 3% of respondents have studied in this field in the two other regions). Regarding religious activities, there is an important gap between New York (32%) and Montréal (less than 10%) where three times less respondents say they are involved in religious organizations, Québec being a society relatively secular.

Respondents' life satisfaction (7.7) is globally quite good, while it is lower in New York at 7.3. At a social level, a large majority considers their neighborhood

<sup>30</sup> About 4% of all respondents from the three cities have selected 'Environment/ecology' as their study area. They were more than 10% in Halifax (1% in Montréal, 2% in New York and 11.5% in Halifax)

<sup>31</sup> Statistics Canada [www.census2006.com/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-553/p18-eng.cfm](http://www.census2006.com/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-553/p18-eng.cfm)

<sup>32</sup> Refers to the questionnaire and list of activities.

to be a pleasant area to live in (85%). Almost 45% of respondents think that people who live in their local area trust each other and 58% think that, altogether, these people can have an influence on local public policies. However, a bit less than 40% think they are well or very well informed about the way their local area is managed, certainly expressing strong expectations in that regard.

### Different priorities in the regions

Poverty (57%), the environment (46%) and social services (33%) are seen as the most important priorities for respondents. However, choices are made in a very different way in the New York region. As shown in the table below, poverty is the first priority, and more importantly in the Halifax region (64%). But if the environment is the second most important priority in Montréal (52%) and Halifax (47%), it is not the case in New York (35%), where it is the third most important priority for respondents. In this region, the second most important priority is the economy with 39% of respondents mentioning it against 8% in Montréal and 10% in Halifax. It is important to note the fact that the unprecedented economic crisis hitting the world economy since 2008 was born in the United States, which certainly plays a role in these differences.

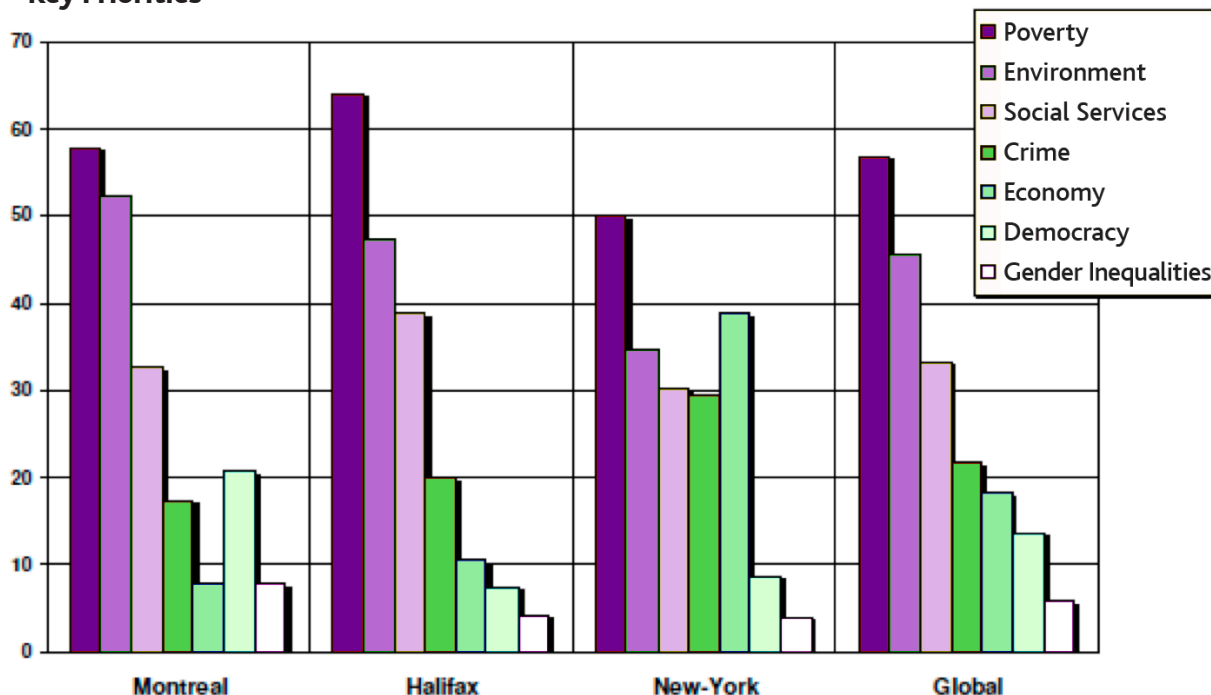
Regarding the improvement of social services, it stands as the third most important priority in Montréal (32%) and in Halifax (39%), but only as the fourth in New York where it is almost at the same level as crime prevention – approximately 30% in both cases.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

### A way of living based on comfort

In all three regions, respondents' habits and activities show that their lifestyle is based on comfort. Most of them use diverse communication means (notably television and telephone, including mobiles) and regularly use their computer for school work as well as the Internet. On a practical level, they use a microwave or an electric cooker for cooking. Those spontaneously mentioning their fridge are less numerous even if they prepare their own meals. Several respondents mention their washing machine as an electric device they use regularly, unlike the dishwasher and vacuum cleaner, which they use less often. Regarding food, an important proportion of respondents go shopping at the supermarket in their neighborhood. However, many respondents also buy their food at the grocery store and local markets. Some respondents, particularly in New York, say their parents buy food. Freshness, value for money, diversity and healthiness are the most important criteria for purchasing food products even if discounts also have an influence. There is a high level of environmental awareness among many respondents referring to local food markets, nutritional quality, local, seasonal, organic and if possible, fair trade products in Montréal, which looks more like an exception in Halifax and New York. Some respondents also mention specifically less packaging as a criteria in their purchasing choice:

**Key Priorities**



*"The most important criteria for me is that the product is as bare as possible. Less packaging = less waste"*  
(Montréal, Canada, F, 18-23)

Public transport is what respondents mention the most often in terms of mobility, especially to go from home to school/university, followed by walking. Bicycling is a mean of transportation that is more often adopted during hot seasons for respondents from Montréal and Halifax. The use of cars is more often associated with professional activities, holidays or week-end activities. Several respondents mention environmental concerns as an important criteria in their mobility choices. It is, however, not the case for respondents from New York who are focused on convenience: only one of them said one of the reasons he used the metro was the environment, when others have a very different approach:

*"I DO NOT like my commute.....It is dirty, crowded and polluted"* (New York, United States, F, 24-29) .

### Expectations and Concerns: Three Perspectives

The objective of the survey was to evaluate young people's attitude and behaviors but also their expectations, taking into account their current needs and the future of the community or environment they live in. Unsurprisingly, young people from the three cities that were explored – New York, Montréal and Halifax – have very different expectations and concerns.

#### **New York: Housing, Energy and Transport Costs**

For most of the young people in New York who participated in the survey, good and affordable housing seems to be a major concern. One of the recurrent criticism they have concerns the price of energy and the impact it has on housing costs, particularly when accommodation often lacks good insulation and ventilation systems. Some respondents would like a greater attention to be given to energy savings:

*"I wish the lights in our dorm rooms and living areas could have sensors to save energy."*  
(New York, United States, F, 18-23)

Another key concern is the lack of green space in New York and the fact that one has to move away from the city center to really be able to breathe, which explains strong expectations for more efficient and reliable public transports. Regarding food, respondents wish products were more affordable, diverse and of quality, but also to be able to buy organic products that are less frequent and much

more expensive. Transporting shopping bags from the grocery store to one's house is perceived as the main problem in New York:

*"I dislike to bring all the bought groceries back home since they are heavy."*  
(New York, United States, M, 24-29) )

Last but not least, respondents from New York clearly identify three main issues that are quite common but contribute significantly to their dissatisfaction: pollution, crowded public transports and the difficulty to move in Manhattan, either by car, by train or by bike. New York suffers from the same syndromes as all big cities and the young people from New York would like to see the quality of their public transports increase, in terms of cleanliness but also in terms of services. Some would like more bicycle lanes but in a city where cars are still largely prevailing, it seems hard to imagine that their dream will ever come true.

#### **Montréal: More Space and a Better Quality of Life**

Young people from Montréal dream about space: to have a bigger apartment or garden and maybe one day a house. Space, a very North American concept, is an essential component of quality of life. In addition to this aspiration, comes the desire to live in a pleasant, bright and personalized environment. Mowing the lawn allows one to take in air, and it is considered a pleasant activity for respondents. However, for young people living in New York, this activity does not really make sense. Many of them consider they are only there temporarily, and no one thinks about mowing the lawn in New York.

In Montréal, respondents also wish for an environment or surrounding that integrates sustainable development objectives: more bicycle lanes, recycling centers available nearby, equipments to produce compost. But Montréal is not exempt from the impacts of urban development, as noticed with nostalgia by some:

*"It used to be the country side here, now with urban development we don't even need to move to live in town"* (Montréal, Canada, F, 24-29).

Regarding food, the price or products – especially organic products – and their availability (quality), particularly during the winter, are real concerns among respondents. In addition, the possibility to buy these products in small local markets also matters. Several respondents would like to have a market nearby where they live, so that they can frequently interact with the producers and better

know their products. During the winter, the quality and diversity of food products is lower. However, because they would like to encourage local shops and producers, some respondents regret that products are often more expensive in groceries than in supermarkets. They also wish for organic and fair trade products to be more affordable and accessible. The difference between organic and fair trade products is also very important for those who want to know the origin of the products and what they contain. Lastly, regarding mobility in Montréal, several respondents express their lack of satisfaction when it comes to the availability and quality of services: "I would encourage even more car sharing and the use of public transports. Current prices are too high to help most people access these. I would even say that our society today reduces the access instead of encouraging it, because regional and inter-city transport services are being cut down" (Montréal, Canada, M, 18-23). Respondents also wish for more bicycle lanes but most importantly, they wish for a transport network that goes in all areas of the city.

#### **Halifax: Best policies and true nature**

Young people in Halifax would like to be able to have more outdoor activities. This is a paradox, given that they live close to nature since Halifax is a coastal city, but they don't have time or the necessary transportation means to move around. The survey reveals that the quality of housing – especially in terms of heating costs and bad insulation – is a real problem in this city. Several respondents would like to go back to true nature or simply walk along the beach.

Regarding food, young people from Halifax share the same concerns as those living in New York and Montréal. It is also difficult to find organic products and they remain too expensive. Some respondents think the way products are packaged in supermarkets and the packing obsession is in contradiction with the quality of the products. They also note that if there were more public marks nearby, people would certainly shop there more often.

*The labeling of products is not good enough. I would love to know where the products I buy come from, and if they contain any genetically modified foods"* (Montréal, Canada, M, 18-23).

Lastly, a large majority of young people from Halifax wish for a better quality of public transport services and huge investments in this sector. Respondents

strongly criticize the reluctance of public authorities when it comes to developing bicycle lanes, which leaves cars as the only means of transportation even for short distances:

*"More bus routes should be available in Halifax and the potholes in the road make riding a bike very uncomfortable! Public transport in general is poor throughout the province and travelling outside Halifax is all but impossible without a car"* (Halifax, Canada, F, 24-29).

## **CHANGING SOCIETIES: UNDERSTANDING THE PAST TO BETTER MANAGE THE FUTURE**

Generally, one could say that respondents are well aware of the social transformations and changes that have occurred during the last century. Some of them are satisfied with the importance given to sustainable development values or principles, such as the awareness of the impact our actions can have on our environment, especially in a context of resource scarcity, as well as of the disappearance of community values (solidarity, simple life, closer to nature, seasons).

On the other hand, a large majority of respondents is realistic. Life was difficult in the past, their grandparents had fewer opportunities; they had to work and have children younger, and did not have a lot of time for leisure. Having less access to the media and limited means of communication (transports, computers, Internet, etc.), meant a less stressful life but this was also a great limitation to their understanding of the world. However, among the youth who have participated in the survey, there are some differences in the way they think about how their grandparents lives looked like and more importantly, what they want for the future.

#### **New York: A Great City is Born**

The contrast in New York comes from the large number of respondents whose grandparents are not from the United States but immigrated from Eastern Europe, communist countries, Central America (Cuba, Trinidad, etc.) or Latin America. It is also interesting to note that people living in New York seem more concerned about economic issues and social status differences.

*"My grand-parents were coloured so that primarily made their life ultimately hard (319)".* (New York, United States, M, 18-23).



Among the positive aspects of the lives of their grandparents frequently mentioned, we can emphasize the image of an outdoor life, better relations with neighbors and communities, less crime, more time to spend with children and less stress. Overall, the general impression is that their life was less complicated, they took pleasure in simple things while being aware of the environmental impact of the American Way of Life in their daily lives:

*"They relied on sustainability and had a grander sense of community investment and communal living. I think while they were very hard workers, who had their struggles, life was more simple, healthy and less distractive and stressful."*  
(New York, United States, M, 18-23)

Among the negative factors mentioned, it is essential to highlight the pressures caused by the economic issues that were more important, information technologies that were less developed and less education. People had to work at a very young age, working days were longer, and especially distances to work were interminable. Moreover, racial segregation was very present during those times.

### Montréal: The Clash of Values

Respondents are very aware of the historical changes that have occurred in Québec and in particular the difficulties faced by their grandparents. The weight of institutions, like the clergy and religion, have certainly played a role in the social development of Québec and slowed down, in large, part of its economic development. Some noted that prospects for work and life choices were clearly defined in the past (negative) but that it helped to strengthen the social ties that are now much more blurred. Respondents from Montréal are also very aware of the evolution of women's rights and their arrival in the labor market, a theme absent in other cities. It is also important to note that their grandparents experienced what was called the "dark ages" which limited the development of innovative ideas:

*"My grandmother was exiled to France to escape the grip of the Church on the arts"*  
(Montréal, Canada, F, 18-23). )

Among the positive aspects of the lives of their grandparents, the topics most frequently discussed are: more time to talk, a better understanding of neighborhood, more developed relations with people, more control over their time, less pressed with their time, and the little things in life were

appreciated; the river water was clear and people could swim there.

As for negatives, some issues are specific to the social constraints of the Quebec environment: daily life was hard and made of resignation. Their grandparents had a short youth marked by family responsibilities, work and many children at an early stage in their lives, and limited access to education. They lived in small villages and depended on particular industries and had few opportunities for employment and leisure. In addition, the religious, pervasive at that time, and numerous prejudices created walls especially for women, whose roles were drawn on maternity, child education and household chores:

*"They had many more children at that time. The men worked hard and the women stayed at home. Gender inequality was more frequent and it was all too much based on religion"* (Montréal, Canada, F, 24-29)

### Halifax: Between Rural and Urban development

Life around Halifax seems much more oriented towards local and rural values. The grandparents of the respondents often lived on the farm, there was no electricity and they had to meet their basic needs are recurring themes. The impact of the Second World War also seems to have made an impact on their grandparents, making them more fearful and perhaps less optimistic about the future.

*"I think there will be very little comparison. Although we live simply and eat as locally as possible, my grandparents led very simple lives when they were my age. We are faced with a colossal problem of global change from all the greenhouse gases we've emitted into the atmosphere. They faced the terrible Second World War. Although, World War II threatened to tear the world apart, the horrors that came with it will likely pale in comparison to what could happen if we don't drastically abate our greenhouse gas emissions."*  
(Halifax, Canada, M, 24-29).

Among the positive elements mentioned, it can be said it took some time before the means of mass communication could bring the effects of commodification in their daily lives. Family values were more prevalent, people worked hard, there were more domestic and especially fewer products assembled and packaged at the factory. As for negatives, there was often no electricity, especially in winter, and a limited variety of products.

## TOWARDS MORE OPPORTUNITIES

### Promising Scenarios

Among the scenarios of the survey, respondents in the three metropolitan areas identify the Vegetable Bag Subscription and, almost equally, energy management and urban compost, as the most promising scenarios regarding food and household activities. In terms of mobility, all scenarios are equally perceived.

#### **Vegetable Bag Subscription**

This choice is primarily based on factors that promote health and a more balanced diet. However, respondents also emphasize support to local producers and the fact that this option is an innovative idea and quite realistic in terms of potential application. In this regard, they suggest putting in place information campaigns for such options to be better known. It is also suggested that it should be more affordable and available in supermarkets for families who make all their purchases there and need to monitor their budget. The adjustment of quantities and portions depending on the needs of different customers - people living alone and larger families - is also a modality that would be welcomed. Greater flexibility in the delivery days and a wider variety of products especially during the winter are also discussed. The main actors identified for the implementation of such initiatives are mainly groups of farmers, municipalities, civic associations, associations of local merchants, supermarkets, shops for organic food, non-profit organizations (NPOs), the Government and health authorities.

#### **Energy Management**

In general, respondents spontaneously identify environmental protection as a reason for adopting such a scenario while seeing a direct economic benefit from it. The scenario is perceived as very easy to put into practice, and as a solution that encourages greater individual responsibility for energy consumption and natural resources protection. Respondents who selected this scenario also have suggestions to improve outreach: information campaigns and easy access to the equipment, government grants, incentives or penalties based on consumption, mandatory installation for all new construction. The actors that are especially important are governments and municipalities, civic associations, but also companies (discounts on the purchase of products with low energy consumption).

#### **Urban Composting**

For respondents who expressed a preference for this scenario, they said this is a very good idea, easy to achieve and it is a simple way of raising awareness of environmental problems that helps reduce and reuse of waste – all of which can be directly applicable and visible in neighborhoods. Among the challenges: sorting and smell, lack of accessibility and proximity of equipments and a clear lack of information. It is suggested that the recovery of compost is taken care of by the municipality, to organize public information campaigns on the benefits of composting and on how to do it, but also to ensure the availability of many bins given the slow pace of decomposition and to propose possible applications in winter. The actors that are the most relevant are municipalities but also governments, citizens' associations in neighborhoods and businesses.

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Almost all respondents think they are already very well informed about climate change. But they believe outreach is essential to expand the number and extent of behavior changes around them. Two out of three young adults consider that education is key and a public duty to perform and almost 25% maintain that behavior change takes a long time and that we must go beyond mere information on sustainable development.

Studies show that people's expectations with regard to the communication of sustainable development are numerous (Tremblay, 2006, 2007, Tremblay and Lachapelle, 2009): whether workers who say they have little information or are uninformed about the commitment of their employers in relation to sustainable development, citizen critical of the discourse of private organizations, public or government, or consumers who demand eco-responsible products and services, communicative issues on sustainable development are multiple. Communication of sustainable development is still a very young area: less than five years ago, these issues were not yet listed in the agenda of the vast majority of organizations. In addition, the professionals of different disciplines of communication, who are themselves confronted with the magnitude of the issue, still have only very few reference tools and research to guide them and help them advise and assist organizations so that they develop a culture of responsibility based on the principles of sustainable development in their overall structure.

### The words to use

The expressions used to talk about sustainable development among English-speaking respondents are organized around the concepts of environmental heritage, moral responsibility and quality of life. They use phrases like "environmentally friendly", "preserve our planet for future generations", "give back to the earth, take away as little natural resources as possible", "live happily without causing environmental damage", "no or little net damage on one's surroundings", "where waste is limited and necessities are just that, necessities", "good for you and does not harm those around you", "do not hurt the people or nature of this world", "live on less but still get what you need", "not causing too much waste ... giving back to the earth somehow". In addition to these environmental references, there are some more complete definitions, which incorporate the three environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development:

*"Trying to reduce your impact on the environment [...] reducing the gap between rich and poor [...] having accountable governments to lead us [...] live in a way that will allow future generations to enjoy similar prosperity". (Halifax, Canada, F, 18-23)*

Some expressions are used in the same manner in Franchophone Montréal: "A lifestyle is sustainable if it is not destructive," "use of renewable resources and pollute as little as possible to enable the next generation to have a good life." The social element also appears several times: "Where it is appropriate to the greatest number and is not selfish." But the more complete definitions are more numerous:

*"A sustainable lifestyle must be environmentally friendly, respect nature, earth and humans who inhabit it. It must be consistent with good faith, common sense, peace, freedom and goodness. The lifestyle must consider future generations" (Montréal, Canada, F, 24-29).*

*"A sustainable lifestyle is directly related to preserving the planet for future generations. Not only does it preserve the environment for these generations, but it must be healthy and viable. In addition, a sustainable lifestyle should ensure that ALL human beings live a decent life, among other means using redistribution of wealth" (Montréal, Canada, F, 24-29).*

### More responsible actions

For most respondents in the three metropolitan areas, more responsible actions are accepted without question by a more moderate use of the car, through

the adoption of public transports for their regular trips, as well as a consumption based on needs, hence being more responsible. They recognize the need to conserve water and reduce energy consumption. The purchase of local products, recycling, composting in addition to what they can integrate as their individual responsibilities and, in general, they stress the importance of limiting over-consumption and waste in all its forms.

## CONCLUSION: MANAGING THE FUTURE AND CHALLENGES FACING THE NEXT CENTURY

Young people in North America dream of a future based on a balanced life, based on more human values allowing self-development at a familial, professional and social level. In general, as most of our respondents are students, they are very concerned about their future and are generally very aware of the challenges and opportunities available to them in the coming years while being fully aware of the limitations they face in their ability to be able to act on their immediate environment. And if many want to become more involved in their community, they are generally optimistic while being realistic about the tasks that await them in future years without feeling like they have to pay for decisions made by the generations that preceded them. In fact, the challenges of the next century remain as challenging for them than those held by generations that preceded them. And controlling the future remains a challenge at all times. In fact, they recognize that some control issues and collective actions clearly point to the place that should be given to education and communication to respond appropriately to these issues. In addition, differences in individual and collective values observed in the three cities and three cultures studied demonstrate the importance of being attentive to target populations and regional realities, and to develop solutions tailored to needs and expectations. In this regard, issues of communication are numerous and it is clear that the support of research in this emerging field is increasingly essential.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gaudreau, L. (2007). « Mise en œuvre de la Loi sur le développement durable – Un rôle central pour les communicateurs », Tremblay, S. (dir.). Développement durable et communications – Au-delà des mots, pour un véritable engagement, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec, p. 21-31

- Gouvernement du Canada, Loi fédérale sur le développement durable, [www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=3598186&Language=e&Mode=1&File=30](http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=3598186&Language=e&Mode=1&File=30), read October 1, 2009
- Lachapelle, G. (2007). « Mondialisation, développement durable, gouvernance et démocratie – Comment assurer un développement véritablement durable et rendre la mondialisation plus équitable ? », Tremblay, S. (dir.). Développement durable et communications – Au-delà des mots, pour un véritable engagement, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec, p. 77-88
- Lachapelle, G. (2005). « Globalization and Governance: Aspiring to a Fairer Globalization », *Development*, 48: 1, 52-60.
- Lachapelle, G. et Paquin, S. (dir.) (2004). *Mondialisation, gouvernance et nouvelles stratégies subétatiques*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval.
- MDDEP (2007). *Stratégie québécoise de développement durable 2008-2013*, [www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/developpement/strategie\\_gouvernementale/strat\\_gouv.pdf](http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/developpement/strategie_gouvernementale/strat_gouv.pdf), read October 1, 2009.
- Statistics Canada
  - > Median Total Income, [www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil107a-eng.htm](http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil107a-eng.htm), read October 1, 2009
  - > Population, [www40.statcan.gc.ca/l02/cst01/demo05a-fra.htm](http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l02/cst01/demo05a-fra.htm), read October 1, 2009
  - > Households expenditures, [www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil10b-eng.htm](http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil10b-eng.htm), read October 1, 2009
  - > Census, [www.census2006.com/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-553/p18-eng.cfm](http://www.census2006.com/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-553/p18-eng.cfm), read October 1, 2009
- Tremblay, S. (2006). *Développement durable et responsabilités sociales dans la communication d'entreprise : tendances canadiennes et québécoises (Rapport de recherche)*, Centre d'études sur les responsabilités sociales, le développement durable et l'éthique, Chaire en relations publiques, UQAM.
- Tremblay, S. (dir.) (2007). *Développement durable et communications – Au-delà des mots, pour un véritable engagement*, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Tremblay, S. and Lachapelle, G. (2009). « Social Dialogue and Public Participation : A New Era of Sustainable Development and Responsible Organizations », Leger Marketing (ed.). *The disloyal Company*, Transcontinental Books, Montreal, 175-192.
- U.S. Census Bureau
  - > Population, [www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/009865.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/009865.html), read October 1, 2009
  - > Income, reported in NY Times ([www.nytimes.com/2007/08/29/nyregion/29poverty.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/29/nyregion/29poverty.html)), read October 1, 2009
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics – New York Office
  - > Household expenditures, [www.bls.gov/ro2/ce9805.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/ro2/ce9805.pdf), read October 1, 2009



# The GSSL: The Philippine Case Study

## Philippines: 114 participants

By: Laiden G. Pedriña, Young Artists Fellowship for the Environment Inc., Philippines

### The Philippines and its Youth

A country in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is an archipelago with 7,107 islands. It has a total land area of 300,000 square kilometers and with a tropical and humid climate. The projected population of the Philippines in 2009 is 92.23 million.<sup>33</sup> Officially, it is known as the Republic of the Philippines and is divided into three geographical areas: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It has 81 provinces, 136 cities, 1,494 municipalities, and 17 regions.<sup>34</sup> Its official language is Filipino and English, and with around 55 different ethnographic groups, the Philippines has 171 languages and dialects.<sup>35</sup>

There are hundreds of thousands of non-government organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines. In the year 2002 data alone of the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), stated that there were 152,535 registered NGOs.<sup>36</sup> This number only proves how active the civic participation in the Philippines is. Despite the ever increasing number of NGOs and civil society organizations, there has been an imbalance of growth across its regions. Poverty incidence in some other regions is even higher than the national average.<sup>37</sup> The income inequality in the Philippines remains the highest in Asia and the Pacific Region based on the *World of Work Report 2008* of the International Labour Organization (ILO).<sup>38</sup>

The Philippines ranks 105<sup>th</sup> among 182 countries rated by the United Nations Development Program in the 2009 Human Development Index.<sup>39</sup> It was overtaken

<sup>33</sup> This figure is based on the National Statistics Office. For more details, please visit the website [www.census.gov.ph](http://www.census.gov.ph).

<sup>34</sup> This can be found in the General Information of the official Philippine Government website, [www.gov.ph](http://www.gov.ph).

<sup>35</sup> YOUTH IN THE PHILIPPINES: A Review of the Youth Situation and National Policies and Programmes ( New York: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations, 2000), 18

<sup>36</sup> Cariño, Ledivina V., *Between the State and the Market: The Nonprofit Sector and Civil Society in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Center for Leadership, Citizenship and Democracy, UP National College of Public Administration and Governance).

<sup>37</sup> Philippines Midterm Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2007, 25.

<sup>38</sup> World of Work Report ( Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, 2008) 9.

<sup>39</sup> Human Development Report 2009, *Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development* (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 2009) 148.

by some countries in Southeast Asia like Malaysia on the 66<sup>th</sup> spot and Thailand on the 82<sup>nd</sup> spot.<sup>40</sup>

Based on the 2004 UN Country Common Assessment (CCA) of the Philippines, armed conflict is considered as a major problem to peace and development. According to CCA, the rebellion in Mindanao is caused by factors such as "social justice, exclusion and a desire for self-determination."<sup>41</sup> Armed conflict worsens poverty as it damages the natural and agricultural resources, displaces people and creates low confidence among investors. Based on the 2006 Family Income and Expenditure Survey, six of the top ten poorest provinces in the Philippines are in Mindanao.<sup>42</sup>

### Filipino Traits – Family and Religion

Filipinos are known to be friendly and hospitable. They give high value to their families as family is considered the basic unit of the Filipino's society. The close family relationship is the reason why Filipinos have extended families. Married sons and daughters may live together with their wife/husbands and children in their parent's house. In the Filipino culture, it is still prevalent that the working sons or daughters in the family give a portion of their salaries to their parents as part of their support.

Filipinos are also known to be religious. Some of the religious leaders have established a strong influence over the decision of the Filipinos in voting in the national and local elections. Major religions in the Philippines are Roman Catholic, Muslim and other Christian religions such as *Iglesiya ni Kristo*, Protestant, and Aglipay.

### Youth

In the Philippines history, youth have played vital roles in the struggles against foreign aggression and oppressive governments. The Philippine National Hero Jose Rizal, who lived during the Spanish era, died

<sup>40</sup> Among the criteria being measured to measure the Human Development Index are life expectancy, adult literacy and enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; and a standard of living.

<sup>41</sup> *Philippines Midterm Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2007*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> [www.nscb.gov.ph](http://www.nscb.gov.ph)

at the age 35, a proof that he served the country in the days of his youth. One of Rizal's famous words is "Ang kabataan ang Pag-asa ng Bayan," (The youth is the future of the nation). Out of around 80 million Filipinos in 2003, there are 23 million youth ages 15-30 years old.<sup>43</sup> The Article III, Section 13 of Philippine Constitution highlights how youth are considered an important sector in the Philippine society:

*"The state recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs."*

The National Youth Commission (NYC) is the government youth agency. Its core function involves research, policy formulation, advocacy, networking, mobilization, partnership, institution building and the likes.<sup>44</sup> On the local level, members of the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council) are elected enabling youth to have representation in their respective baranggay (the smallest unit of local government). This Sangguniang Kabataan is also in-charge of the sports development program of the baranggay.

There are few research and studies made on the lifestyles, attitudes, and aspirations of the Filipino youth. One of the highly publicized surveys was done in 1996 by the Social Weather Stations for the NYC. The survey found that Filipino youth put great importance on marriage and family, friends, education, work, religion, society and money. Compared with American youth, Filipinos, according to the survey, are more satisfied with their lives. They have good relationship with their parents and their community.<sup>45</sup>

The said survey, however, was done more than a decade ago, and some of the important results may have changed over time due to major economic and political changes in the last decade. In 2001, for instance, President Joseph Ejercito Estrada was overthrown from

his post by a people power revolution led by civil society and youth, known as EDSA II. Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took over the presidential position to run for 2004 national election and win the presidency. The leadership of the current president Arroyo, however, does not escape from critiques and attacks; instability is still important. The political issues and challenges faced by the Philippines in the last decade could have changed the perceptions and aspirations of the Filipino youth. For instance, there has been an increasing trend in the number of Overseas Filipino Workers. According to the Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CoF), 13% of the country's labour force or 4.8 million Filipinos are Overseas Filipino Workers.<sup>46</sup> As the confidence level of the youth towards their political leaders decreases, more may seek opportunities to go abroad for work or immigration.

On the economic side, there has been an increase in growth of the business processing office (BPO) or more commonly known as call centers in the Philippines in the last decade. The Philippines, having English as a second language, has a competitive edge in this industry over other Asian countries. The BPO/call center industry is considered one of the biggest employers in the Philippines. This industry has employed a significant number of young Filipinos, which does not go without controversy. However, the call center industry is projected to reach a total workforce of 1.1 million by 2010:<sup>47</sup> it provides competitive salaries, and the increase in purchasing power among youth who work in it may have significantly changed their lifestyle.

Cellphones, internet/laptop and other gadgets are more accessible to Filipino youth nowadays than ten years ago. Cellphones, for instance, are no longer a symbol of status quo as anyone can buy a cellphone, whether it is brand new, second hand or just a cheap imitation.

With the ever-growing changes in the political and economic situation of the country, and the changing trends in the global communication, there is a need to update our understanding of the lifestyles of Filipino youth. New studies and research will provide new insights for policy makers and NGOs.

<sup>43</sup> Atty. Marc Fabian B. Castrodes (Commissioner of the National Youth Commission) PowerPoint Presentation: "An Overview of the Filipino Youth Here and Abroad," (Quezon City: NYC, 2003). This PowerPoint presentation was presented by Atty. Castrodes during the Youth Forum of the 2nd Global Filipino Networking Convention on December 16, 2003, Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Manila.

<sup>44</sup> www.youth.net.ph

<sup>45</sup> From the paper THE SITUATION OF FILIPINO YOUTH: A NATIONAL SURVEY by Gerardo Sandoval, et al. The paper was presented at the 14th World Congress of Sociology, Working Group 3 / Sociology of Childhood at Montreal Canada on July 26 - August 1, 1998. For more information, please visit www.sws.org.ph/youth.htm.

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey Ducanes and M. Abella, ILO Asian Regional Programme on Governance of Labour Migration Working Paper No.5 : Overseas Filipino Workers and their Impact on Household Poverty ( Bangkok: International Labour Organization, 2008) 1.

<sup>47</sup> Paolo Romero, "BPO jobs to reach 1 million in 2010," The Philippine Star, September 21, 2009 < http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=507236&publicationSubCategoryId=63 >.

## THE SURVEY

The GSSL-Philippines survey was conducted by the Young Artists Fellowship for the Environment (YAFE) with the support of the Junior Chamber International (JCI) – Perlas Pasay, which is a local chapter of the JCI.<sup>48</sup> YAFE chose two data gatherers among their members<sup>49</sup> while JCI-Perlas Pasay created an adhoc committee to particularly focus on coordinating with YAFE for the database of members, data gathering and other related activities done for this survey.

This survey does not represent the perception of all Filipino youth as the criteria for recruiting respondents were exclusive and restricted.<sup>50</sup>

The main challenges faced by YAFE in data gathering were:

- The GSSL started during school vacation season in the Philippines – thus the data gatherers were able to interview only those attending summer classes; and
- Less than 40% responded through email – The Philippine is archipelagic, as such the data gatherers thought that email would be the most effective and cost-efficient tool in conducting the survey. Most of the members of the JCI-Philippines are entrepreneurs or employees. The JCI-Perlas Pasay sent emails to its respective e-groups in the JCIP. YAFE made use of online social networks such as Facebook to catch the attention of many youth. The prospective respondents, however, deemed the questionnaire too long and time-consuming. Constant follow-ups had to be done to encourage prospective respondents. Data gatherers made a data gathering via telephone calls just to make sure that the prospective respondents were given enough time for the survey. In the end, YAFE and JCI-Perlas Pasay were able to generate 114 respondents, with equal male and female respondents. The respondents whose age range from 18-23 were the most eager to answer the survey, followed immediately by the 24-29 range.

<sup>48</sup> For more details about the JCI, visit [www.jci.cc](http://www.jci.cc).

<sup>49</sup> Angelicum Oda and Janin Roy Sarcia

<sup>50</sup> Due to limited resources, the data gatherers agreed that the respondents should come from urban or suburban areas to obtain a general overview of the lifestyles of this particular group. A survey of the sustainable lifestyles of Filipino youth in rural communities can be a good study in the future. Filipino youth are generally active in civic communities and works. The data gatherers agreed that respondents should come from youth who are not directly involved in the environmental field as they may already have an idea of what to be asked and what could be the expected answers. The data gatherers would like to gauge how other youth who are not involved in environmental works perceived the idea of sustainable lifestyles.

## Respondents' profiles

The majority of the student and young professional respondents have a good standard of living,<sup>51</sup> which fits the criteria for collecting questionnaires. The respondents are also typically integrated in their local communities. They are involved either in sports, religious or socio-civic clubs. Filipinos are very community integrated people. They treat their communities as an extension of their families. Old Filipino traditions are still prevalent like "bayanihan"<sup>52</sup> where neighbors work together to support each other. The majority of respondents is not directly involved in environmental and sustainability issues either in their studies, work or volunteer activities as intended.

Most of the respondents value environmental degradation as one of the top three priorities.<sup>53</sup>

Respondents' priorities on addressing poverty over environmental issues highlight how environmental issues will always take a backseat when poverty is very prevalent. Respondent Ms. Catherine Castro even said during a personal interview that although she feels that she has a good and comfortable life, she does not feel secure if there are a lot of poor people on the streets. "We can never be safe if a number of Filipinos are poor, we need to solve first the poverty and the rest will follow."

## SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND OPPORTUNITY

Most of the respondents feel that they have good lives and most of them are optimistic about their future. YAFE and JCI-Perlas Pasay believe that it is innate for Filipinos to become optimistic.

<sup>51</sup> YAFE believes that the results do not really reflect the realities of youth in the Philippines, in general. In rural communities for instance where some of YAFE's programs are concentrated, some of the students will tend to skip their classes when the quarterly examination is already near. These students skip their classes to help their parents in the farmlands and raise money for the payment of tuition fees. In the urban poor communities where JCI-Perlas Pasay's programmes are concentrated, similar economic challenges are prevalent so that a lot of students are forced to look for extra work. The results of the survey may be different if we made a more heterogeneous set of respondents by also interviewing rural youth or those who came from financially-challenged families.

<sup>52</sup> In old Filipino culture and tradition, bayanihan is depicted as a picture of a neighbourhood working together to carry a nipa hut or old Filipino houses made of native leaves. Bayanihan can also be depicted as a picture of farmers working together.

<sup>53</sup> Most of the respondents put eradication of poverty and reducing the gap between the rich and the poor as number 1 priority. Next is the combat of crimes and prevention of conflicts and fighting against environmental degradation comes next.

### Housekeeping

Watching television and surfing or playing computers are the favorite past-time of most respondents. The respondents, being generally exposed to televisions and computer, are therefore also exposed to mass media, popular culture, and advertisements.<sup>54</sup>

### Food

In terms of food selection, organically produced foods are generally unpopular among respondents who are more exposed to fast foods, processed food and canned goods. Commenting on scenarios, half of respondents expressed their preference for "vegetable bag subscription" over "urban garden".

The respondents, therefore, were divided between "fast" results/convenience and "slow" results. Farming is generally introduced to some Filipinos youth especially in Technology and Home Economics subjects in high school and Filipinos also love gardening. These factors can be the contributing reason for the divided results over the convenience of vegetable bag subscription and the slow-pace results of urban gardening.

### Mobility

In terms of mobility, most of the respondents are dependent on gasoline-run vehicle like cars, and mass transportation such as buses, and taxis. This can be attributed to the fact that the Philippines have a humid weather and therefore few people may prefer to use bicycles and roller blades as means of transportation. Even in the choice of scenario, most of the respondents chose car sharing over bicycle center. Most of the young professionals in the Philippines work in business districts in urban areas, which may be 5 to 35 kilometers away from their homes. While the respondents also value bicycle as sustainable transportation, this is not a convenient means of commuting as most young people aspire to work in a business district. In a small community, there are less job opportunities, as such transportation/commuting from your house to the workplace is important. Also, the road system in the Philippines has no bike lanes in most of its cities. Although small groups nowadays are getting more and more involved in bicycle campaigns, these groups are actually based inside a university or small community.

<sup>54</sup> The data-gatherers failed to ask follow-up questions regarding watching TV and surfing the internet. Interesting follow-up questions could be what are their favorite TV programs? What are the websites or on-line games they usually surf? How many hours do they spend watching TV or surfing the internet? Such questions may provide YAFE and JCI-Perlas Pasay with a wider perception of the things that may generally influence respondents in terms of their lifestyle choices.

### Energy Consumption

On the choice between urban composting and collective laundry,<sup>55</sup> 87% of the respondents preferred urban composting.

*"I prefer urban composting because I do not want to share my dirty clothes with the dirty clothes of people I do not know. Also, in the house, even with the presence of a family washing machine, my mother and I would prefer to manually check our clothes one by one to see if there is still dirt" (F).*

Filipinos do not usually use the service of a laundry shop, except for those students or young professionals who live in a dormitory or apartment. According to most respondents, clothes are very personal items to them; they do not want to mix up their clothes with the others. The respondents also said that they usually use the services of a laundry shop for dry-cleaning or special treatment for sensitive clothing.

*"We are already doing this [urban composting] at home" (M).*

The preferred urban composting, according to most of the respondents, is almost similar to existing government programs – the waste segregation system, where biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste are separated through different trash cans. Some of the respondents feel that this system complements the urban composting scenario. Respondents are more receptive in improving the existing program, rather than trying an untested program on collective laundry.

## COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY

The respondents feel that they already have basic knowledge about climate change. Almost everyone believes that information can be a driver for change.

Most of respondents associate sustainability with clean and healthy living, back to basic and healthy habits. Only a few mentioned salaries and a stable economic situation. Sustainability is not yet associated with human rights, labor issues, children's rights and other socio-economic challenges for most of them. Most respondents believe that "sustainable" has something to do with the "green and clean" environment. Probably their perception of what is sustainable is affecting their current life situation. Most of them have good

<sup>55</sup> Part of the Questionnaire: Urban Composting is a self-service composting in the neighbourhood, collective laundry, on the other hand is about a shared system of environmental washing machines in a condominium or neighbourhood.



standards of living, and hence they cannot associate sustainability to other interlinked human rights issues.

Their perception of sustainable lifestyle is totally different from the perception of some rural and urban poor who were interviewed by YAFE three years ago.<sup>56</sup> For these rural and urban poor, sustainable lifestyles are about the ability to meet their needs everyday that will sustain their lives.

The difference in perceptions is a very interesting result as YAFE has been campaigning sustainable consumption and production (SCP) issues across social classes that are very different.

Since most of the respondents consider watching TV and surfing the internet as their favorite past-time, and sustainable issues for them are generally about "green and environment," massive information campaigns should be done to inculcate the other facets of sustainable lifestyles such as addressing human and animal rights, child labor issues, tourism, advertising, and fair trade.

A lot of companies in the Philippines are joining the band wagon of "going green," and while this may be good news, the Filipino youth have to embrace this situation with caution. Are these companies using the "going green" campaign as merely a marketing tool to increase sales? Are they seriously addressing the environmental issues or just another green washer?<sup>57</sup> The issue of sustainable lifestyle should go beyond planting trees or "reduce, re-use, recycle" campaign. It should also address the issue of not patronizing the products and services of the companies that are involved in unfair labor practices, child labor, and environmental malpractices.<sup>58</sup> Filipino youth should be more critical, and more NGOs in the Philippines should be more involved in the campaign for SCP.

## CONCLUSION

The GSSL in the Philippines has been helpful for YAFE in gauging and understanding better the thoughts and perceptions of some urban youth in the Philippines. Even though the GSSL respondents cannot be considered as statistically representative of the Filipino youth, the

survey results raised good points which can serve as a basis for thorough and in-depth studies in the future.

The policy recommendations of YAFE and JCI-Perlas Pasay as a result of the survey are:

- Integrate the Sustainable Lifestyles Campaign in school curricula at the earliest age of 6 – Sustainable values are more easily taught to children than to the youth whose values may have been influenced already by a lot of external factors;
- Include the Sustainable Lifestyles Campaign in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programmes of private companies and government offices:
  - > procurement policies – companies should highly consider not only the adherence of the bidders to the national eco-labelling program of the Philippines, but also the policies of the bidders regarding child labor, unfair labor practices, abuse of women and unresolved issues of the company on human rights violation.
- Review and revisit the provision of the labor law code - YAFE believes that some of the provisions under the Philippines Labor Law legalize the abuse of employers over their employees. A lot of companies may claim that they have good programs for the environment, and their labor practices are good because some of the supposed unfair labor practices are legalized in the labor law.
- Capacitate decision makers at the local level in implementing and replicating the best practices available abroad – when everybody is joining the bandwagon towards green environment, now is the time to capacitate the local leaders on how they could replicate the best practices abroad. Likewise, there are also good practices among local government units which are worth being replicated by local leaders abroad. An online space should be provided where local government units around the world could interact to share the best practices;
- Strengthen the support of the government on organic farming – organically produced foods are still unpopular for most of the respondents. We therefore recommend that there should be a strong policy on organic farming. The policy will be the foundation for strong programs by the local government units in institutionalizing organic farming.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was developed with research and data gathering support from Mr. Angelicum Fernandez-Oda, Communication Director of YAFE.

<sup>56</sup> YAFE members had a chance to ask and collect ideas from rural youth during the YAFE-Otesha Seven-day Bike Tour Held on December 2006. Sustainable lifestyles for most of the rural youth is about having a good job and financial independence.

<sup>57</sup> Green washing – when a particular corporation claims that their products and programs are more environment-friendly than they actually are. It is a form of deception to join the bandwagon of "going green" and increase sales.

<sup>58</sup> Illegal logging for instance

# GSSL Country paper for Portugal

**Portugal: 2190 participants (669 questionnaires analyzed)**

Inspire - Comunicação para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável  
Cláudia Cruz and Rita Ferreira (Database analysis and integral report)  
Maria Carvalho (Database analysis, Research Overview and report paper)  
Maria Manuel Pedrosa (Overall analysis and report paper)

## THE SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION/ DISSEMINATION IN PORTUGAL

This present survey was implemented in Portugal from February to June 2009. Portugal gathered a total of 2,190 questionnaires. The analysis of this publication was based on the 669 fully completed questionnaires. Inspire translated the survey and established protocols with several institutions and universities to promote participation in the GSSL: BCSD – Portuguese Business Council for Sustainable Development; Portuguese Catholic University, European Social Project “Escolhas” – a network that helps socially excluded young people; UNESCO’s Portuguese Committee; Consumers Institute; Portuguese Youth Institute and Universities (public and private). In addition, many questionnaires were collected among students from the University of Porto, another active GSSL partner.

## PORTUGAL’S CONTEXT: SHORT OVERVIEW

Portugal is Europe’s most southwestern country with 92,391Km<sup>2</sup> and approximately 10.627,250 inhabitants. Today, Portugal is a developed country, economically prosperous, socially and politically stable with a high Human Development index (0,909). It is one of the 20 countries in the world with a good standard of living despite its low GDP (-3.7% ) when compared with other European Countries. In terms of unemployment, due to international economic crises, rates are much higher among young adults (in the first quarter of 2009, unemployment increased to 9.1%, but to 19.6% for young adults). According to a study conducted by Observatório da Juventude (Portuguese Youth Observatory), the majority of young adults believe that the solution for these problems lies in more governmental support to companies and a larger intervention in the economy.

Most of the Portuguese population lives on the west coast and Portugal is facing desertification of the

north interior and south interior: Most young people (38.8%) lives in urban areas and near the coast in cities such as Lisbon and Porto.

Portugal is facing a demographic challenge. The number of old people is increasing every year (17.3% in 2007) and studies predict that in 25 years it will surpass twofold the number of young people (15.5% - 2007). The number of births is decreasing every year.

Commonly, Portuguese young adults live with their parents until they achieve financial and economic independence, until 28.6 years old (medium rate), But this situation, however, participates in the development of more consumerist attitudes. A survey of Observador Cetelem showed that in Portugal we have a higher rate of new cars bought by young Portuguese people under 30, maybe this is a consequence of living with their parents, not having to pay rent, gas, electricity, food etc.

In the last decades, there was an improvement in education standards, with more people graduating, mainly women – in 2006 there were 189 women graduating versus 100 men.

Portuguese young adults aren’t motivated to join a civic movement, an NGO or causes - only 13.5% do so according to a study from the Instituto Português da Juventude – Portuguese Youth Institute – although they have an ecological conscience and defend liberty and human rights. Economic issues don’t interest them as well and they have a profound disbelief in politicians. Therefore they are not that much interested in politics, which explains the low voting statistics – 51.3% didn’t vote in past elections.

Young adults love technology: almost all of them have computers, access to internet and mobile phone.

## RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The GSSL received 2,190 questionnaires, thus, due to the high percentage of participation, 669 (fully completed) were analyzed in this paper. The sample is very well balanced in terms of gender - 57% female; 43% male. In terms of age, 54% are between 18-23, 29% - 24-29 and 17% - 30-35. In terms of occupation, we have 70% - students and 30% - Young professionals. This prominence of students is due to the implementation of the survey that mainly went through universities.

Portuguese young adults leave their parents house much later than European young adults. In 1991, 59.6% of young adults lived with their parents, and it rose up to 76.3% in 2001.

Students stay at home until they achieve a good economic situation. That means that they don't have to pay rent, food, gas, electricity, water, etc. They feel very comfortable living with their parents.

Most of the respondents (59%) live in small or medium-sized towns mainly in apartments (44%) or houses (35%). 55% still live with their parents, whilst 19% already live with a partner/wife or husband, 12% live alone and 9% live with friends. The main source of student income either comes from family assistance (56%), from a salary (8%) or a fellowship (6%). 21% have a job but they do not earn enough to be independent. As for young professionals, 9% are unemployed. Based on the survey results (socio-economic background), we can assume that most students who participated have a higher standard of living than young professionals.

## HOW DO PORTUGUESE YOUNG ADULTS LIVE AND WHAT ARE THEIR EXPECTATIONS

### Overall life satisfaction

In terms of life satisfaction the average is 7.32 and the median is 8, which reflects that the majority of the respondents (74%) are satisfied with their lives. When asked to describe their current life, the majority is pretty positive. Most of the young professional respondents (56%) are mostly satisfied with their lives. Student (27%) would say that they are studying and doing fine. However, counting the answers about an unsatisfied life we reach 24%. They refer to having financial problems, wanting more professional stability, more time for family and for leisure.

Nevertheless in the end they chose an optimistic approach, which is a good sign of belief in themselves and in the future. A few respondents reflected concerns with sustainability.

*"I seek a more stable life; with more economic a professional perspectives" (F, 30-35).*

*"My life is going fine. I'm healthy. I'm studying and having good grades; I've got lots of friends and I'm very happy. My family is also well" (F, 18-23).*

*"I'm very busy. I'm happy for being occupied, but sometimes I miss being with my friends and family and to have fun" (M, 18-23).*

### Portuguese youth and their community

Almost **90%** of the respondents think that they live in a pleasant friendly place, although 30% think their community doesn't have strong solidarity and relationships and 50% doesn't know.

*"I hope to see better environmental, economic, political and social conditions" (F, 18-23).*

*"I have a relationship with some of my neighbors, which I know I can trust. I do not know most of my neighbors. There's almost no sense of community. People don't get together to fight for their rights. People tend not to think of others, they tend to be very selfish" (M, 18-23).*

*"Where I live there's no concept of community. I have great relationships with my closer neighbors but the rest of them live in their "world". I'd like to live under an extended concept of community, where there are more community ties" (M, 24-29).*

*"I wish there were a more proactive collective spirit when it comes to solving common problems" (F, 24-29).*

Maybe that is why **36%** say that most people don't trust one another and **44%** don't have an idea about it, probably meaning that they don't know their neighborhood well. 43% don't feel comfortable asking their neighbours to keep an eye on their house or property while away. And 7% don't like when their neighbors interfere with their personal life.

### Modern life paradox

In general, respondents know very well the main differences between the lives they lead today and that of their grandparents:

- For 42% of the respondents their grandparents had a more peaceful life, meaning that they had less stress which led to having more and stronger relationships in the family and with the

community. Today life is considered to be the opposite: more stressful, which means less healthy and with less relationships between the family and in the community.

50 years ago, Portugal was an undeveloped country. Most of the population lived in rural areas and had a peaceful life. Portugal never faced civil strives or military problems. We think that what our respondents want to say is that today somehow they live in a more stressful way, live in big cities, work late etc. Life was very hard but our respondents somehow have an idealistic perception of the way their grandparents lived.

Also, 50 years ago, women stayed at home taking care of the children and the house or work in the land, contributing to stronger family and community relationships. Today 55,9% of the active women work.

- But most of the respondents are aware of the difficulties their grandparents faced 50 years ago: they had to assume more responsibilities at a younger age, many of them had to work very hard all day, there was less or no time for leisure and less freedom due to dictatorship. Education and professional opportunities were poor.
- 75% of the respondents know that on the other hand now they have more time for leisure or cultural activities, more liberty and more educational conditions and technologies that are of great help.

*"Much calmer. Without transport, with no traffic and no schedules. No stress. Lived in community with neighbors, with whom they shared the work, etc. They lived in the village in the countryside. They had better food but less access to health care" (F, 30-35).*

*"My grand-parents had to work harder than I, in the fields, with much hunger and misery and lack of freedom, lack of freedom of speech. On the other hand they had more values and good relationships in their community and with friends" (M, 18-23).*

*"Worse in terms of living conditions; increased physical effort, less use of technologies and information but they had a quieter life, better in terms of human relationships" (M, 24-29).*

### A bright future

Respondents have mostly optimistic perspectives about the future, winning with a score of 59%. It can be considered a good sign in today's context (world crisis).

*"I think we're in a transition period. People are finally aware that they can and must change their daily life routines as it has a global impact... otherwise it will continue to contribute to the deterioration of the planet" (F, 24-29).*

*"There will be less noise, more recycling and separation of garbage, we will not depend on fossil fuels. Technology will be more advanced" (M, 30-35).*

*"I believe that I will be in a society very close to sustainability and well balanced with nature due to end of wars and conflicts based on religious dogma and natural resources" (M, 24-29).*

In 10 years, 25% expect to have a better life with more stability, a higher income and more time for family and friends. 24% of the young adults wish to have a child, which implies good expectations regarding the future, namely adequate conditions to start a family. Considering that 70% of our samples are students, only some respondents (6%) said that they want to be working in their area of study. This came as a surprise, since studies demand great investment and effort for students as well as for their families. Is it a lack of expectations and a more pessimistic view at the future?

Portugal is facing, like other European countries, the problems of the world crises, and because we are one of the less developed countries of the EU the impact is more negative. Unemployment and finding first job is becoming a big reality to young people – it rates 19.6%.

Very few respondents relate the future positively with sustainable development.

A less optimistic vision was given by 21% of young adults who see mainly a scenario of more work and more responsibilities. Another 13% respondents show a negative perspective towards sustainability, referring to the existence of problems, such as more stress, more traffic and pollution, the financial crises and therefore, less professional opportunities and more unemployment.

### The ideal life: a realistic approach

When it comes to dreaming about the future, surprisingly respondents seem to have their feet on the ground: answers are very close to what they envision when it comes to the future in 10 years.

73% of respondents wish to be happy and healthy (meaning a life without stress), having a good job



with good financial conditions, surrounded by family and friends with free time left to spend with them or in leisure or cultural activities. Some also wish to be professionally accomplished. It is not asking too much, we guess. But what about wishing to live more sustainable in our very future?

We can assume that young adults do not dream about “big” things, such as changing the world, “big” future, but they have rather simple hopes/expectations, they are not idealists.

In terms of Global Peace Index, Portugal is in 13th position.

27% of the respondents express their desire of living in a more sustainable planet. They want to live in a planet with peace. They want a country that respects human rights, with social justice for everyone and economic equity. And they hope that activities will be done in a more environmental friendly way.

*“As less polluted as possible, as most sustainable as possible, more ecologically and environmentally friendly as possible. As “greener” as possible. Studying, getting new degrees, more education. Always building more academic and professional qualities. At a personal level, happy with my choices. Being able to go everywhere without using a car, just biking, walking or using public transportation” (M, 24-29).*

*“In a society without social differences, unemployment, crime or violence. Health and education services would be accessible, free and with quality. There would be no pollution” (M, 30-35).*

*“Generate the least impact on the environment (energy saving, wasting water, reduce the waste amount produced). Living next to green spaces, where there are places to exercise. And not having to pay a fortune for an apartment or a house near these locations, as this shouldn't be considered a luxury reserved only for a small number of persons” (F, 18-23).*

### What would be the worst way of living?

Wondering what would be the worst way of living reveals what really matters in life. Being alone without friends or family would be the worst for most of the respondents (22%). This result shows us that affection and more generally social relationships are in the end critical issues. In the economical and professional context, respondents think that working all day long in a job that they don't like or that is boring or

working too much would be the main reason to make them unhappy (12%). Unemployment would affect them as well, but for a small number of respondents (10%). This means that in some way young adults believe that they won't lose their jobs or are confident that they will find a job eventually. 13% refer as a worst scenario, “to live on credit or have no money or low salary” (in an economic perspective); 9% refer “to live in a chaotic and polluted city and to live near the environmental collapse” (in an environmental perspective) and 13% refer “to live in a war or violence scenario” (in a social perspective).

We can also find in these answers the perception of stress and lack of time as a crucial issue on quality of life.

*“No health without economic possibilities ... without a roof to sleep ... without the possibility of access to food and clean clothes ... without a love on our side ... without friends and relatives ...” (F, 18-23)*

## SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Shopping for groceries

When young adults are short on food, they mainly go to the supermarket or the hypermarket and 40% enjoy doing so. The choice for the supermarket is because they find better prices and quality. In fact, prices, mainly for primary goods, are considered by 30% to be too high. Even though local trade can count on a group of fans (up to 23%), fair trade or organic product stores and the local producers are still not a choice, which can be related to the higher prices, the availability of shops and the distance from the producers. Some terms related to sustainability as “local products”, “freshness” and “seasonal product” were used by a minority of 10%. References to “less packaging” or “environmental friendly” were almost absent.

### • Food scenario – Vegetable bag

Portuguese respondents would adopt the vegetable bag scenario, because they think it would ensure a healthy life – they are aware of the importance of a healthy diet – as well as benefit the community, namely local producers and local commerce, showing that sustainability was well understood. Another good reason for adopting this scenario is the comfort of having a “ready to buy” solution that is not as time-consuming as picking different vegetables from the shelf: it is

indeed a quick scenario that implies a low level of personal involvement. As the vegetable bag scenario is a quick-type, it also means that young adults tend to choose what doesn't waste time and shows quicker results.

Respondents gave good suggestions for improving the vegetable bags scheme: development of awareness campaigns targeted at the general community to promote small producers; vegetable bags should be available in supermarkets and at the local market; different product bags (fruits or regional products) should be made available too; home delivery is also a service that would be interesting to implement.

According to respondents, the main actors for the introduction of this solution would be businesses, municipalities and associations, like producer organizations.

### Going from here to there...

In everyday life, most young adults use the car (59%) and public transport (49%) to go around: most respondents say that they use a "mix" of both. But when it comes to making a choice, a majority of them (57%) prefer to drive. "Freedom", "flexibility" and "comfort" were the reasons most mentioned which could make it difficult to introduce awareness to change to more sustainable options. Most of these drivers are female students. Only 3% of the respondents use the bicycle as a mean of transport in a daily basis.

*"I like to ride everywhere on my bike: certainly I avoid the traffic, no trouble with parking and it's faster and I'm not polluting the environment" (F, 18-23).*

*"I'm very pleased when I use public transport because I know that's good for the environment" (M, 18-23).*

30% say that they would like to bike and walk more, but it's difficult to do it on a daily basis because of the traffic and lack of safety or because they live far away from work or school.

It is interesting to see that when it comes to expectations 54% of respondents want to have more efficient public transport (on time, with a better network, or with more schedules, namely night shift), which means that it is a choice taken into account. Some respondents clearly say that they prefer it to the car. We can assume that if improvements were to be made in the future people would use public transportation more.

*"I would like that public transport was more efficient in order to have a better alternative to the car" (F, 18-23).*

### • Mobility scenario – Car sharing

The motivations for respondents to adopt this scenario have mostly to do with the opportunity of reducing pollution and the use of resources, when at the same time individuals don't have to renounce the comfort of car transport and for people who don't have one it stands for a very good solution. The main benefit perceived is the positive environmental impact it can bring and the improvement of mobility and accessibility without causing the negative impact of having too many cars in the city.

Regarding the suggestion to improve this initiative, 30% find it perfect and wouldn't change anything, whilst 29% underline the need to create a good management system, a good network and parking locations. They also think that booking should be done online. To implement this kind of project respondents think it has to be done in partnership involving the government, municipalities and the private sector (businesses).

Considering that 59% of the respondents use a car every day and some use it because public transport is not efficient, we guess that this kind of initiative would solve some problems. Respondents refer to traffic jams and the bad conscience of polluting the environment by using a private car. Car sharing is a quick-type scenario which leads to having a rapid change in day-to-day life with little effort, and the 'pay-as-you-use' principle is particularly appreciated.

### At home with the TV and the PC

At home, cooking takes place for the majority (80%), with 22% referring to it as the "most liked" activity. TV is watched by 70% of young adults and it scored among the most liked activities with the highest number of answers (61%). Some respondents have to do the cleaning (9%) and only 7% refer to study as a main activity, which is strange since 70% of the respondents are students.

The computer is used by almost all of the respondents, which shows a high level of inclusion in the information society. For 41% it is among the most liked activities, because it turned out to be a very important communication channel in these groups (chat rooms, emails, messenger and Skype).

When it comes to improving everyday life at home, most of the answers relate to very simple things such as having more time to rest or to take a walk. We can assume that this is due to a stressful day life, with little spare time. On the other hand, nearly as many respondents wouldn't change anything.

- **Housekeeping scenario – Urban composting**

Most of respondents chose the urban composting scenario due to its perceived environmental benefits (reducing ecological footprint and pollution). However, only 19% think it would be an easy scenario to adopt and 11% say that they

already do composting. Some respondents say that they wouldn't adopt this scenario because of lack of hygiene and because they don't find it practical. It is a slow-type scenario that requires some personal effort, more time and attention to achieve results. Still, there are 89% who think this scenario would be adopted because of the benefits it brings to the community and to life quality (due to the use of less chemical products). Most of young adults are satisfied as it is and wouldn't change anything. But others suggest that it should be well planned before implementation in terms of composting points, inspections and very clear regulations. The actors involved in this kind of project would mainly be the municipalities.

Regarding the three scenarios, our respondents think that infrastructures and channels of distribution should be developed in order to be effective. **This correlates with the UNEP document on "Communicating Sustainability: How to produce effective public campaigns", where it refers to the dangers of communicating without infrastructures, as it happened in Portugal in early 2000, when some communication came forward regarding eco-points and it wasn't established everywhere. Therefore, it had a negative impact on the population.**

Portuguese young adults want to have simple and practical things to do. The communication concept should be all about "How to do it" rather than more information on the subject. A good structured campaign on "taking into action" is missing.

## TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Most young adults feel that they have enough information on environmental issues. The information given was not new to them and therefore wouldn't be a driver for changing opinions. But there are still 20% of respondents who wish to have more information and find that awareness is still needed. The information presented in this case will make them change some habits, like recycling.

*"Switch off lights, turning off the taps when not necessary, drive less and walk more on foot, making compost, reuse and recycle more, plant more trees, consume less things that are not important, etc."*  
(F, 24-29)

For the majority of the respondents, awareness campaigns on climate change and environmental challenges have a key-role to play in promoting real change in behavior. According to them the success of such campaigns depends on creating engagement messages that turn these issues into "each individual's" issue. A minor group of respondents though has a skeptical vision. They argue that more information will not turn awareness into action. For them people

have enough information to change habits. It doesn't happen because people don't perceive these problems as theirs too. The impacts seem to be happening in the future, very distant from their present life. Even so, respondents suggest this issue should be brought into people's everyday life so that they see the benefits of changing something.

The definition respondents have for the concept of a "sustainable way of living" is very coherent between them. They argue that to make a sustainable path people have to adopt behaviors that protect the environment and use natural resources in a more rational way, in order to reduce negative impacts on the planet. The planet is to be preserved so that future generations can enjoy it as well. This is a strictly environmental vision. 30% of the respondents refer to other aspects related to sustainable development such as the reconciliation of economic, environmental and social actions towards the well-being of the planet. In this case, respondents are well aware of the triple bottom line notion of sustainability, reflecting that they are well informed on this issue.

In terms of the most important priorities globally, the respondents voted in first place "Reduce or eradicate poverty, the gap between rich and poor". In second place comes "Improve economic conditions" and in third place "Fight environmental degradation and pollution. The respondents want to contribute to a more sustainable future, through environmental actions: to reduce consumption: energy, water, fuel, 17% would like to drive less.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Sustainability issues have not really entered the day-to-day lives of young Portuguese. They are aware of its importance, but either through difficulties in terms of infrastructure and market supply - products, transport and other services - or a slightly "conservative" view of life - having a job, having a good salary and having children – they have not yet put it into practice. We are at the point of Knowledge/Knowing and not yet arrived to Knowledge-Doing and much less to Knowledge-Being. Respondents feel that they are sufficiently informed about the issues of sustainable development, but essentially link them to environmental aspects and not to those which they value most, such as the pace of life, relationships with others, loneliness and other economic and social aspects, for example, the fight against hunger. For campaigns on these subjects they believe that the emphasis should not be on information, but implying what each one can do. There's a need for guidelines to help them take action.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide sustainable development from a global perspective, as something that aims to make the world viable, livable and equitable
- Crossing the interests and concerns of young people with the issues of sustainability.
- Connecting the sustainable development of everyday gestures and developing guidelines that actually refer to action.
- Developing campaigns that promote, rather than inform, youth involvement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inspire is a communication consultancy for Sustainable Development composed by 3 partners with more than 10 years of experience in this field. Our projects are carried out to help our clients and their stakeholders to address the issue of sustainable development. In this context we develop, for example, sustainability reports, workshops, employee trainings, theatre plays, etc.



# A glimpse into the lives of South African youth: Thoughts about sustainability

## South Africa: 141 participants

Morgan Strecker, MPH student and MA International Education Development - University of Cape Town & Columbia University (analysis and reporting)

Alison Swartz, MPH student and BSocSci Hons Social Anthropology - University of Cape Town (reporting)  
Christopher J. Colvin, PhD, MPH - University of Cape Town (final review)

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

While the consumer movement has existed on the African continent since the 1990s with consumer organizations active in 28 countries, limited resource capacity, poor access to information, weak political support as well as the basic development challenges such as poverty alleviation, access to essential services, gender inequality and environmental protection have hindered the growth and strength of the movement.<sup>59</sup> Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains a major challenge, as access to basic goods and services remains significantly impaired, impacting lifestyles behaviors and consumption patterns while challenging the overall meaning of "sustainable lifestyles and consumption".<sup>60</sup> The shift towards sustainable lifestyles provides a unique opportunity to address some of these development challenges. For example, issues of food security for today and tomorrow's generations are intrinsically linked to careful handling of the soil, water and biological diversity. While the stakes and risks are high, there are an increasing number of examples of successful campaigns highlighting environmental, ethical or social aspects of consumer products.

## A YOUNG DEMOCRACY

On April 26, 1994, South Africans of all races voted in the democratic government, led by "freedom fighter"<sup>61</sup> Nelson Mandela, which marked the end

of the apartheid era.<sup>62</sup> In 1996, the Constitution of South Africa, aimed at the ensuring equal rights of all South Africans regardless of race, was drafted and legally implemented. Section 24 of the Constitution recognizes access to a healthy and protected environment as a basic human right and was subsequently strengthened by the National Environmental Management Act of 1998 which emphasizes the right to sustainable development – where all important environmental factors have to be taken into consideration prior to making development decisions.<sup>63</sup> Although South Africa's Constitution has been recognized as one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, it is one in which the rights it affords are 'progressively realized' – that is, they are dependent on the government's resources and capacities.

Despite 50% of the country's population living below the poverty line, South Africa is considered a middle-income country. It ranked 129<sup>th</sup> out of 182 on the 2007 Human Development Index<sup>64</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> in 2009 globally in terms of GDP. South Africa has an abundant supply of resources, well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport sectors, a stock exchange that ranks among the top twenty in

<sup>59</sup> Consumers International. (2008). Sustainable lifestyles/ consumption from an African consumer perspective – 5th African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production. June 4-6, 2008. Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>60</sup> African Development Bank. (2002). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa – Progress, Prospects and Policy Implications. Global Poverty Report 2002.

<sup>61</sup> Term used to describe those who fought for freedom from the oppressive apartheid laws for black South Africans.

<sup>62</sup> Apartheid was a system of legal racial segregation enforced by the National Party government of South Africa between 1948 and 1994. While such segregation in South Africa was initiated during colonial times, apartheid was introduced as an official policy in the 1948 General Elections. This legislation classified inhabitants into racial groups (black, white, colored and Indian). From 1958 onwards, black people were deprived of their citizenship, legally becoming citizens of one of ten tribally based, self-governing homelands, four of which became nominally independent states. Residential areas, education, medical care and other public services were separated and services provided to black people were inferior to those of white people. For more information on the apartheid era, please visit: [http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm#end\\_apartheid](http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm#end_apartheid)

<sup>63</sup> National Environmental Act, 1998. Available at [http://www.acts.co.za/ntl\\_enviro\\_man/index.htm](http://www.acts.co.za/ntl_enviro_man/index.htm). [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>64</sup> The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a decent standard of living.

the world, and a modern infrastructure supporting an efficient distribution of goods to major urban centers throughout the entire region.<sup>65</sup>

As of 2009, it was estimated that South Africa was home to approximately 49 million people across its nine provinces, with approximately 52% being female. South Africa is an ethnically diverse nation; 79% of its population is of black African ancestry. It has a considerable child and youth population with nearly one-third of the population being younger than 14 years and with 39% accounting for “the youth” between the ages of 14 and 34 years.<sup>66,67</sup> Although apartheid laws have been abolished, their legacy remains evident in myriad ways. Daunting economic problems remain – especially poverty, lack of economic empowerment among previously disadvantaged groups, a shortage of public transportation and high unemployment rates. Wealth and income are still largely distributed along racial lines with the average white household earning considerably more than the average black household. The devastating effects and prevalence of HIV has also considerably altered the structure of the South African population, as approximately 10.6% are HIV infected, and 17% of those aged between 15 and 49 are said to be living with the virus.<sup>68</sup>

However, in the last 16 years, the country has achieved many successes, including greater political stability and greater economic freedom. At the same time, the effect of the unprecedented HIV/AIDS epidemic has been colossal, and substantial increases in mortality and morbidity are threatening to overwhelm the health system and undermine South Africa’s potential to attain the MDG goals.<sup>69</sup>

*“Youth are a valued possession of the nation. Without them there is no future. Their needs are immense and urgent. They are the centre of reconstruction and development.”*

— Former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela

<sup>65</sup> The World Fact Book: South Africa. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sf.html>. [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>66</sup> In this paper, the term “youth” will always refer to South Africans between 14 and 34 years.

<sup>67</sup> Statistics South Africa, 2009. “Mid Year Population Estimates”. Available at [www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp). [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Chopra, M., Lawn J., Sanchers D., Barron, P., Karim, S., Bradshaw, D., Jewkes, R., Karim, Q., Flisher, A., Mayosi, B., Tollman, S., Churchyard, G. & Coovadia, H. (2009). Achieving the health Millenium Development Goals for South Africa: challenges and priorities. *The Lancet*. 374:9694, p 1023-1031

## THE YOUTH OF THE ‘RAINBOW NATION’<sup>70</sup>

With some 39% of South African society aged between 14 and 35 years, young people clearly comprise a substantial part of South African society. The National Youth Policy, enacted in 1997, recognizes the importance of youth development to nation building and seeks to ensure that all young women and men are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society.<sup>71</sup>

However, the political and social inequalities that stemmed from apartheid have left behind deep-rooted problems that have had and continue to have a marked effect on young people. According to the World Bank,<sup>72</sup> youth have experienced poor housing conditions; limited and racially-biased access to education and training; limited employment opportunities; high levels of crime and violence and a general disintegration of social networks and communities.

These disparities have left the bulk of the youth unable to find paid employment. In 2002, Statistics South Africa compiled a study of the South African Labor Market and found that 75% of youth sampled were unemployed as a result of lack of access to effective basic education. In 1999, 69% of South Africans between the ages of 15 and 34 were unemployed; a percentage that grew by 18.1% in 2005.<sup>73</sup> When looking at the relationship between unemployment and education, the percentage of those unemployed with a Matric qualification<sup>74</sup> or higher still grew significantly between 1995 and 1999.<sup>75</sup> Unemployment remains highest amongst black South Africans aged 15-24 years (54.6% in 1999) and lowest amongst white South Africans of the same age (8.1%). It is clear that education and

<sup>70</sup> Shortly after the 1994 elections, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu coined the name “Rainbow Nation” for South Africa as a way to positively recognize its cultural, racial, social and language (11 official languages) diversity.

<sup>71</sup> The National Youth Policy. Available at <http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/policy/intro.html#Preface> [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>72</sup> United Nations 2007 “World Youth Report. Young Peoples’ Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges.” Available at [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wyr07\\_complete.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wyr07_complete.pdf). [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>73</sup> Statistics South Africa 2002 “The South Africa Labor Market” pg 120. Available at [www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp). [Accessed July 2010].

<sup>74</sup> In South Africa, Matric is the final year of high school, or Grade 12.

<sup>75</sup> Statistics South Africa 2002 “The South Africa Labor Market” pg 120. Available at [www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/populationstats.asp). [Accessed July 2010].

employment, or lack thereof, and its ill-distribution across race categories, play a critical role in the lives of South African youth.

## THE PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S GSSL RESPONDENTS

While the GSSL targeted young adults 18-35 years old, the majority of the 141 South African respondents fell in the 18-23 year age group (60%) and the 24-29 year age group (16%). About 40% of the respondents were males and 59.6% females. Approximately 39% were undergraduate students and 54% were postgraduate students, and 20% of respondents were both students and held a job. Respondents were invited to participate in the survey by their lecturers, through emails from the various Rhodes University departments and units (Journalism, English, Environmental Education and Sustainability Unit) and by colleagues.

Among their field of studies, 21% were studying environment and ecology, and some 24% selected "Other" as their field of study. This high proportion of environmentally-aware students may be a reflection of the dissemination strategy for the GSSL (as the Environmental Education and Sustainability Unit of Rhodes University were active in contacting possible respondents). However, it may also reflect the growing concern among young people about environmental issues in a country with an abundant supply of natural resources as well as important health issues with close linkages to the environment.<sup>76</sup>

The fact that the survey was implemented in a university setting and a majority of students were postgraduates made it challenging to clearly separate the data between young professionals and students as it is likely respondents are combining a part or full-time job with studies. Furthermore, as 43% of respondents live in a medium-size town and 28% in a small-size town – urban or semi-urban areas where the cost of living may be higher than in rural areas – some young people may have had to complement their studies with employment. Among those who work, the job titles ranged from bartender/waitress to research assistant and tutor at the university level, graphic designer and communication officer, library assistant, environmental officer and manager of a company. The vast array of job titles provides an insight into

the diversity of employment opportunities for young South Africans, but also speaks to the fact that this population is not representative of the high rates of unemployment amongst the broader population of South African youth.

About 23% of respondents felt that they had a good standard of living while another 23% expressed experiencing minor forms of socio-economic hardship. Seven out of 10 respondents rated their life satisfaction to fall between seven and nine (0 being dissatisfied and 10 satisfied). 86% of the 141 respondents share their homes, whether with parents (16%), friends (42%), other family members, partners or spouse. In total, 58% of respondents live with friends or parents, a reality for many students around the world and particularly in South Africa, where shared housing is more cost-effective and safe. An almost equal proportion of respondents live in university housing or shared apartments/home (29% and 28% respectively) while an additional 24% live in houses.

While no respondent felt very well integrated in their local community, the overall social capital index of respondents ranged from three to eight, where three out of 10 respondents felt fairly well integrated in their neighbourhood (index 6). Seven out of 10 respondents have lived in their neighbourhood for four years or less – which given the majority of them are students was not so surprising. The university where the survey was conducted is in a small "university" town, where a significant proportion of the people who live in the area are university students. During the holidays, to avoid additional housing costs, students often return "home" (often to the places where their parents live). When asked whether their local area was a pleasant and friendly place to live in, eight out of 10 respondents strongly or tended to agree. Four out of 10 tended to agree that their community is one with strong solidarity and relationships. This may be due to the fact that most respondents shared their homes/apartments with peers or family members, increasing their sense of belonging with their immediate environment. This is further supported by six out of 10 respondents strongly feeling or tending to feel comfortable asking neighbours to keep an eye on their homes while away. About 30% of respondents tended to agree that people trust one another in their local area while another 30% neither disagreed nor agreed. As safety is a common concern in South Africa, people have a tendency to trust those closest – neighbouring homes or apartments.

<sup>76</sup> Due to limited resources and internet connections, it was easiest to target youth in particular education settings. A survey of sustainable lifestyles in different settings – rural areas, informal settlements, suburban communities would be of interest and would possibly produce very different results given the different challenges/opportunities facing young people.

Respondents demonstrated a keen interest in getting to know their neighbours, in the importance of feeling safe and surrounded by greenery and in their concerns for the racial inequalities and insecurity that surrounds them:

*"I love the fact that there are loads of trees growing in my neighborhood. Also, even though I don't know people too well, it's nice that most people wave and smile when I do. I hate the fact that it is always black people who are walking and mostly white people who drive - the difference just makes me feel uncomfortable. I wish we weren't culturally so far apart. I wish I didn't always get the feeling from blacks that they dislike/disrespect whites and wish that we would leave the country. I try to be fair-minded and friendly, but sometimes I feel unauthentic when a conversation with someone of another culture feels 'forced'" (M, 30-35).*

*I like the fact that my neighborhood is close knit, but would love it if we didn't have the need for hectic security systems" (F, 18-23).*

Some respondents expressed the need for a closer link with the environment for both the protection of natural resources but also as a means to bring the community closer together:

*"I like the good communication among neighbors with regards to social issues such as crime and sustaining recreational areas such as parks. I would like it if each household in the community took solar power and recycling more seriously since this will lead to a greener community. I would also like it if more people got involved in recreational activities such as sports clubs to encourage parents and children to know each other" (M, 24-29).*

Some respondents reported that their lifestyles restricted their engagement in the community due to work, studies or travel time to get to university:

*"I like chatting with my neighbors, finding out how they are, keeping involved and building relationships that are more than just a superficial "hi" and "bye". I would like to have more time to spend with them though to actually build proper relationships" (M, 24-29).*

## FROM THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

While almost six out of 10 respondents felt they were not well informed about the management of their neighbourhood, an equal number of respondents

agreed that together they could have an influence on local policies. 54% of respondents were involved in some form of community-oriented organization and 74% in an activities-related organization. Almost five out of 10 respondents were involved in environmental organizations while four out of 10 were involved in religious organizations. Involvement in community and environmental organizations was almost equal. Hence, young people's awareness and commitment to these types of organizations highlights their recognition of the realities of their surroundings.

At a global level and in line with the sample of respondents and existing South African challenges, respondents prioritized eradicating poverty (33%), closely followed by fighting environmental degradation (28%) as the most important challenges. The need to improve and develop social services was also considered important by 21% of the respondents, closely followed by the need to improve economic conditions and access to employment (27%). Inevitably, respondents' choices were influenced by the local context. Combating crime ranked fifth (out of eight) as if respondents felt that by prioritizing other global issues such as improving access to employment (hence access to wealth) and social services, as well as preserving the environment, a safer environment could be created. Although South African homes and neighbourhoods are renowned for their security mechanisms (barred windows, electric fences, neighbourhood security watches, etc) and many South Africans recognize this daily aspect of their lives as 'normal', respondents clearly grasped that addressing questions of safety could only be done by addressing the sources of inequality.

## LIVING TODAY AND TOMORROW

Respondents described their current lives with both a personal and more national outlook. Pride in their pursuit of higher education, balanced lifestyles, loving family and partners, the surrounding nature, a simpler life due for many to a move from a big city to a smaller one, and the emphasis on change being a positive necessity were reported by many respondents. In contrast, respondents expressed concern about the lack of political leadership in South Africa, soaring prices, inequity compounded by insecurity and crime, employment challenges and financial burdens.

*"I would tell them that I have finally found some meaning in my life in my studies and my postgraduate degree in Development Studies. Life can be beautiful, not for everyone, but we can work together to make a difference in people's lives. I would tell them that I can't*



*wait to finish my studies and go travelling through Africa to work with different NGOs and other developmental and environmental organizations” (M, 18-23)*

### Housekeeping

Concerning domestic housekeeping activities, 55% of respondents owned and frequently used their TVs for news and sports events as well as computers to connect with friends, download and listen to music, browse the internet and do research or homework. Other popular items included the microwave (27%), radio (27%) electric stove (46%) and kettle (20%). Despite the high cost of electricity, very few respondents expressed concern over energy use. Most respondents thoroughly enjoy reading, relaxing with friends and family around a home-cooked meal, being creative around their homes, gardening, exercising, watching movies or listening to music.

*“I enjoy reading, outside, under the trees or in a warm sunny spot. I enjoy cycling swimming as well” (F, 18-23).*

Many respondents would like to have more time – more time to do nothing, to relax, socialize or cook. *“Probably just more time...” (M, 24-29).*

Working indoors was cited as a problem as respondents felt disconnected from their natural environment and from everything happening in the streets. Lack of public transportation and inability to walk due to insecurity was also reiterated.

*“I would like to be able to walk places when I am home. As it stands it is too dangerous to walk” (M, 18-23).*

Some respondents wished to see more ecological design in their homes and neighborhoods such as community gardens, recycling services or solar panels.

*“I wish my home was more ecologically designed, e.g. with waterless sanitation, solar power, etc. I also wish we didn’t have to be so worried about personal security” (M, 30-35).*

### Mobility

Almost seven out of 10 respondents use a car and/or walk to go to work, university or go grocery shopping. This is a reflection of the sample of respondents that are mainly of a socio-economic category that can afford private transportation and also university students with accommodation facilities near or on their academic campus. Public transportation is deemed inadequate and unsafe and

therefore taxis are often used depending on the time of day, despite their high costs. Many note the dual benefits of walking – being outside in their natural surrounding while also getting exercise – and there is a clear desire from respondents to be able to increase a sustainable form of mobility whether by walking, sharing cars or enhancing accessibility and use of public transportation.

*“The heavy traffic everyday and underdeveloped public transport system. I would like it if each of the major cities of South Africa had a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system or monorails since these are safer than taxis and will allow people to move around effectively, thus more productive communities. This will also reduce traffic, thus reducing carbon emissions from cars” (M, 24-29).*

### Food

When purchasing food, respondents seek out the closest grocery store with the lowest prices for the best taste. Freshness of goods, preferences for organic and free-range products also emerge in the discourse of respondents. Many mention shopping at Pick n Pay – a grocery store that is increasingly broadening its range of “green” products. However, the shoppers fall under two broad categories: those who enjoy grocery shopping to discover new products or recipes and enjoy the social experience of interacting with others in a store versus those time restricted individuals who envision shopping as a chore. Respondents in the first category seek out the community feeling of a market, where interactions with others are key components of their food or culinary experience. This type of respondent tends to be more aware of, for example, the value of locally grown or organic produce.

*“I enjoy the social aspect of the farmers market, talking to the people who grow my food” (M, 24-29).*

While many respondents express a concern over the rising costs of groceries or the queues at the tellers, a majority display an interest in open-air markets, more local (within a 50km radius) and organic produce, less packaging and less choice but more taste. Respondents also indicated an interest in having carbon and water footprints displayed on products. These and other similar interests highlight a growing awareness of green issues.

*“I wish consumers would rather support the local economy and buy at smaller stores, despite the convenience of supermarkets. Consumers should think more about the origin and sustainability of what they purchase” (M, 18-23).*

Respondents idealized a simple life in small and safe towns or cities with stores within walking distance, being surrounded by friends and family, feeling fulfilled professionally and personally, having the time to 'create' and develop additional skills. The need for financial stability and physical security was recurrent in responses alongside with the need for reconnecting with nature.

*"A balanced life, with challenging work, good friends, financial stability, a safe and clean environment and dreams for the future" (F, 18-23).*

When asked about the worst way of life, respondents said that living in a small flat in a crowded and polluted city, working a job they disliked, being isolated from family and friends, living in poverty and being unable to satisfy their basic needs are examples of some of the challenges they may face.

*"To live in a world rife with disease, famine and people who do not care about the world and the people around them" (F, 18-23).*

*"Working in a high rise building in a cubical, in a city, coming home alone to a small apartment without electricity and far from home" (M, 18-23).*

In describing the lives of their grandparents, many respondents contextualized the situation by noting that their grandparents grew up during the apartheid era – an era of racial segregation and political conservativeness. They recognized that their grandparents' lives were difficult given the situation but that their lives were nonetheless simpler, slower-paced, less stressful and safer than today.

*"They lived a very sorrowful life because of apartheid but relatively better lives as compared to the crime and poverty life we live in" (F, 18-23).*

*"I think they had a harder and also simpler life. Simpler in terms of speed. Everything is very fast now and there is a lot of focus on instant gratification" (F, 24-29).*

When asked to envision their lives 10 years down the line, key themes of stability, safety, flexibility and having too little time reoccurred. Some felt their lives would be similar to today with work replacing studies; others foresaw drastic changes due to technology, climate change and the competitive globalizing world. Finally, some envisioned themselves as successful in their careers, happily married, earning a good income and being financially and socially able to give back to their communities.

*"I'm not sure. Either technology will have improved further and everyday life will be even more stressful, or we as a society will have reverted to a simpler way of life - more organic, less polluting, more fulfilling, without having to give up all of technology's benefits. I will be working in 10 years and so that will also affect my daily life. Hopefully I will be able to work in a nature reserve or conservation area" (M, 18-23).*

## REACTIONS TO THE SCENARIOS

Respondents were weary of the scenarios in general – hesitant of the capacity to implement them in South Africa and uncertain of the benefits given the country's context of multiple challenges. There was, however, a clear understanding by the respondents of the scenarios, as well as recognition of the potential value that their implementation could offer. Respondents first sought the benefits they would gain as individuals, but also thought about the work and commitment required of them to implement each of the scenarios as many felt short of time. Communal benefits for the neighborhood were considered after these other factors were considered.

When it came to the housekeeping scenarios, 42% of respondents preferred urban composting, followed by 37% of respondents opting for collective laundry. Respondents repeatedly expressed preferring the ease with which urban composting can be implemented, the idea of living in a green community and also the natural benefits for the gardens when composting is used. Those who chose collective laundry did so because of energy management concerns, lower electricity bills and the time gained by someone else doing their laundry.

*"Although both scenarios are equally as excellent, I liked this urban composting because I like the idea of a green community. Not only recycling waste but also improving the aesthetics of the community. This will also enhance communication between neighbors as they can engage in projects like this together as well as become more familiar with who lives in the community" (M, 18-23).*

With respect to the mobility scenarios, 39% of respondents opted for car-pooling, closely followed by the car sharing scenario with 36% of respondents. Many respondents stated choosing car-pooling simply because it is already informally taking place in their communities, as parents or students car pool to go to take their children to school or go to university in order to reduce their fuel expenses. Those that opted for car sharing did so also because of the perceived cost-benefit of several people equally owning and

sharing the costs of a car. The bicycle scenario was less popular due to the lack of infrastructure in terms of bike lanes and road safety, the strong possibility of a road accident or of the bike being stolen or damaged. Some respondents also mentioned the fact that they would simply be too lazy to bike around.

*“Car-pooling is a great way to save money, and to get to know people in your community” (F, 18-23).*

*“I like car sharing as it means people do not have to own cars and so saves money. I thought at first that the car belonged to one person and they would have to share it, but I prefer this as it allows equal ownership of the cars while in use” (M, 18-23).*

Finally, the most popular food scenario was the urban gardens (39%), followed closely by the vegetable bag subscription option (34%). Empty open spaces abound in South African cities and the support for this scenario was not so surprising once respondents had understood the concept. In both scenarios, respondents were keen for the ‘community’ and ‘local’ aspects as they expressed taking pride in working together on something from ‘their community’. Local South African supermarkets are increasingly bringing “green” products onto the market and open-air markets are on an upward trend. This, combined with the expressed need for more time, may also explain the choice of vegetable bag subscriptions. However, respondents highlighted time efficiency as another reason to choose the vegetable bag subscription.

*“At first I thought urban gardens were pretty unrealistic. I mean, really, using all the space in a city to grow food! Then I realized that by doing this, one would need to work as a community, get to know each other, share the produce. One could grow what one wanted. It would benefit a large number of people and areas. Where I live there are a lot of barren areas that could be used to plant fruit trees (and I’ve often wondered why our municipality is so intent on planting indigenous trees which can’t feed the poor), and other veggies. There is a high degree of leaking water pipes in areas, which would be ideal for growing tomatoes” (F, 30-35).*

## THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR CHANGE

When provided with additional climate change information, about half the respondents felt they wouldn’t modify their responses to the scenarios while the other half felt that, had the information been provided earlier in the survey, they would have reacted differently.

*“The food and washing I wouldn’t change, but I would consider changing the transport scenario. It seems very selfish of me to always be driving due to my hang-ups” (M, 24-29).*

Respondents were also torn about whether additional information would steer people towards adopting some of the scenarios. Some felt that knowledge and education were key drivers in changing behaviors towards sustainability. Others expressed feeling overwhelmed by the existing information on climate change and could not see the immediate benefits for themselves in worrying about this issue. The lack of financial incentives and of easy alternatives compounded by the fact that some respondents felt they would be “giving up” on something was also mentioned. Finally other respondents highlighted the need for a holistic approach that would encompass awareness raising, financial incentives along with practical alternatives.

*“Yes, additional information would help, although this isn’t enough for everyone. In certain cases, saving money is more of an incentive for people and this should be exploited in order to make people adopt these scenarios” (M, 18-23).*

*“Knowledge alone is not enough - alternatives need to be practical, available and viable” (F, 30-35).*

When asked what makes a way of living ‘sustainable’, some respondents gave their own definitions, while others gave adapted versions of the Brundtland definition – meeting the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing those of future generations. Others felt hopeless in the face of such challenges as overpopulation and endemic poverty to address the sustainability issue that seems to be a first world issue. Many tried to quantify sustainability – not being excessive in the misuse of the environment, relying minimally on appliances, reducing packaging and harmful emissions, increasing public transportation and walking. For others, sustainability encompassed a sense of community, of learning to do things differently and taking the time to reflect on our choices. Some definitions also sought to provide alternatives or opportunities for both individuals and communities to reduce their impact.

*“Sustainability is a never-ending process of reflecting and learning to do things better. As long as we are doing this, we are travelling on the sustainability path. Sustainable living is not an endpoint, but a continuous journey of improvement” (M, 30-35).*

## SO, WHAT NEXT? CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POSSIBLE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked about who should implement the scenarios provided in housekeeping, food and mobility, responses covered a wide range of actors even though the government and local municipality played a leading role. Businesses with the capacity to invest in green issues and to communicate around them were also repeatedly acknowledged. NGOs, educational facilities, environmental and community associations, farmers and students were mentioned as actors on specific issues (i.e.: farmers promoting urban gardens). However, seldom was the individual called into question as an actor of change.

*“Government could make this service more attractive by allowing tax breaks to people who use this service. Also dedicated parking for such cars in big cities would make it more attractive” (M, 30-35).*

Given the results of the survey, there is a need for a multi-pronged approach to environmental and sustainable awareness. Within the South African context, there may be a need to raise awareness among decision-makers themselves of the benefits and opportunities provided by sustainable consumption and production approaches.

Young South Africans demonstrate a strong connection to the outdoors and the environment, a willingness to engage with their neighbours and an interest in learning more about viable alternatives to their current ways of life. However, further awareness raising needs to target a multitude of audiences as the answers of young people aged 18-23 (still students and financially struggling) differed in terms of a sense of environmental responsibility compared to the older respondents. Therefore communication and education strategies need to be tailored to specific target groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

To complement this level of education, policy makers, consumer organization and environmental NGOs must translate their words into actions, providing the infrastructure for people and communities to act. For example, concerns for safety figured prominently in the survey therefore enhancing the development of community/neighbourhood watches (as exist in South Africa) would make people feel better and encourage them to walk, partake in community activities, use bicycles and foster a greater sense of community

belonging and solidarity. Such a sense of belonging may be the foundation needed for the creation of, for example, a community urban garden. Another prominent issue was the lack of safe and adequate public transportation to which the government can respond by improving or developing new public transport systems. This was done successfully during the 2010 World Cup and has provided a strong impetus to move forward in this arena.

While many policies recommendations can emerge from the South African results that can be directed at a myriad of players, there is a tremendous need for individual responsibility. If the South African government is to implement a public bus system, individuals must also commit to using it, despite the convenience of using a car. From the answers of respondents, there is a gap between their appreciation for the nature surrounding them and the act of taking responsibility to protect it and change their behaviors

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Conduct the GSSL in different South African settings. While South Africa continues to strive towards equity, the reality is that communities are significantly shaped by race and socio-economic status, and these different contextual factors produce different findings.
- Conduct a form of wide sustainability sessions in each big and medium-sized city in South Africa with youth from all walks of life on possible designs and alternative scenarios for sustainability that they would feel compelled to partake in.
- These same sessions could also be conducted in rural areas.
- Building upon the work of Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles Africa<sup>77</sup>, continue to research and collect case studies of alternative scenarios that can be replicated in both urban and rural settings.
- Further investigate why some youth delegate the responsibility of sustainability issues to higher powers such as government, municipalities and businesses while others are willing to take up an active role.
- As South Africa is a developing economy but has a growing number of businesses, understand how businesses can contribute to greening the economy in this context.

<sup>77</sup> Creative Community for Sustainable Lifestyles - <http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/ccsl/?p=267>



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South African GSSL partners are a cross-disciplinary team of three with a combined expertise in the social sciences, community mobilization, health, education and sustainability issues. Dr. Christopher J. Colvin is a senior researcher at the University of Cape Town's School of Public Health and Family Medicine. He holds a PhD in socio-cultural anthropology and a Masters in Public Health (MPH). Morgan Strecker recently worked for UNEP as the coordinator for the UNEP UNESCO YouthXchange initiative on Sustainable Lifestyles and assisted in the development and implementation of the Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles at the international level. She is currently completing her MPH at UCT and holds a Masters in International Education Development from Teachers College – Columbia University. Alison Swartz is currently completing her MPH at UCT, has a background in Social Anthropology and Environmental and Geographical Sciences. She currently works with Dr Colvin doing ethnographic research on a number of health related topics.

# Skilled, Sensitive and Sustainable: The Swedish Case

## Sweden: 111 participants

Ulrika Holmberg, PhD in Business Administration/Marketing & Niklas Hansson, PhD in Ethnology  
Centre for Consumer Science at School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

*The data from the GSSL survey illustrate substantial diversity in sustainable lifestyle motivation in Sweden. In sum, there are many different forms of sustainability discourse and practice, not one homogenous ideal informed by reflexive Swedish "young adults". Yet, at the same time the survey also illustrates the distinctive and shared trajectory of sustainability discourse and practice within Sweden.*

### SAMPLE PROFILE

Information on the GSSL-survey was disseminated during a two-month period and respondents were addressed in the Swedish cities of Kalmar and Gothenburg. We focused primarily on students but avoided students in environmental and sustainable development programs. In total, 124 questionnaires were collected and 111 were analyzed after deleting those who fell out of the age interval of 18-35. In the sample, there are 59% women and 46% 18-23 year olds. Two-thirds of the respondents live in small or medium-size towns (68%). 42% of the respondents live alone and only 11% live with children. Single households are common in Sweden, especially in the cities where up to 50% of the households are singles. The standard of living is very high for the young professionals and rather high for the students who represent 85% including working students. Three of four students in the sample are financed by loans, when only three of four young professionals have salaries.

### SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF SWEDEN – POTENTIAL CORPORATISM, NATURE'S AUTHENTICITY, TECHNOCRACY AND CONSUMER CULTURE

Gross domestic product (GDP) by expenditure is 479 billion USD (3 156 billion SEK), 52 000 USD per capita in Sweden<sup>1</sup>. Total population is 9.3 million people with 23 % between 18 and 35<sup>1</sup>. The employment rate is 83 % in the age group 20-34 years<sup>78</sup>. Most Swedish inhabitants (85%) live in urban areas<sup>79</sup>. The annual rate of population growth in urban areas is 0.5 %. Housing

<sup>78</sup> Statistics Sweden, figures from 2008. Exchange rate 1 USD = 6,59 SEK (as in UN:s national accounts main aggregates database).

<sup>79</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2007). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision

standard is comparatively high: 0.5 persons per room<sup>80</sup>. Life expectancy is 79 years for men and 83 years for women<sup>81</sup>. The human development index (HDI) is 0.96 (7th place)<sup>82</sup>. The rate of gross enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education is 94 %<sup>5</sup>. Regarding the gender empowerment measure (GEM) Sweden ranks 1<sup>st</sup> out of 109 countries, with a value of 0.909<sup>5</sup>.

Previous research in the Swedish context shows a long *history of political corporatism*. The economy has been collectively managed by employers, workers and state officials – a trend in decline following changes during the last 30 years process of "de-corporatization" (Rothstein 1988; Lindvall & Sebring 2005). Another characteristic often mentioned is that various sustainability or "green" movements are rooted in a profound *positive reception of "the land" in Scandinavia* (Gullestad 1989; Wessling 1983). Furthermore, *technocratic approaches to sustainability and consumption*, the application of technical knowledge, expertise, techniques, and methods to problem-solving are positively valued. Swedes traditionally express preferences for a large involvement on the part of the State (government) and a considerable amount of trust in the promises of technological innovation providing for sustainable solutions (Aléx 2003; Eckerberg & Forsberg 1998; Jörby 2002). Given the historical relationship between the Swedes, their self-identification with a symbolic understanding of the values of Nature, a simple life in the countryside, and imperatives for a responsible relationship with the environment, it is a socio-cultural fact that Swedes understand themselves to be a people dreaming of "a simple life in harmony with Nature"

<sup>80</sup> United Nations Secretariat and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Compendium of Human Settlement Statistics 2001, figures from 1990.

<sup>81</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009), World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision

<sup>82</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2009, figures from 2007.

(Wessling 1983; European Union indicator 2005). According to theology professor Bråkenhielm, today's intricate social interactions and the complicated and stressful work situation affect work, family life and leisure time (Bråkenhielm 2005). Consequently, as traditional religious worldviews lose their foothold, Nature can become a kind of resort, and temporarily relieve us from heavy social duties typical of contemporary Swedish society. Feelings of stress and risk behavior related to health, work, family, friends and the world, are definitely part of the Swedish sample in this survey. Finally, Sweden is often defined as a secular, democratic country, and the church is separated from the state. Freedom of religion is acknowledged according to Swedish law, as finalized in 1952.

But, Swedish consumer culture has been heavily inspired by what Campbell (1987) named a Protestant ethics. The Swedish concepts of "lagom", basically connoting distribution and consumption equality - not to engage in conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1994) - and "folkhemmet" or "people's home" - the Swedish welfare state based on employment security, public health care and values of equality - are possibly a pre-text for developing a more "universal" fairness ethic based on values of equity, non-conspicuous consumption and security consciousness (Eriksson-Trenter & Hodacs 2004; Isenhour 2008). Although the "non-conspicuous" consumer ethic has been central to the Swedish context, several researchers argue that a parallel evolutionary thread of conspicuous consumption has always been present, most visibly during the last 20-30 years and at least since the 1950s (Aléx 2003). Contemporary globalization processes have had an impact on the Swedish situation. These changes work alongside changes within social stratification, with less clear cut social distinctions associated with taste, living, and political attitudes (Mörck 1998).

*"I'm stressed about future work situation, it's going to be hard to get a work. I've been depressed last year, feeling lonely, and stressed about the school situation and that has been affecting my partner and I in a bad way, But the worst part is over... I hope" (F, 24-29).*

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT: SWEDISH RESPONDENTS' STATE OF MIND TOWARDS LIFESTYLES**

Satisfaction index is rather high. Respondents are mostly satisfied with their lives, slightly higher than usual among young citizens in Sweden.

### **The slow and simple life of grandparents in comparison to contemporary lifestyle**

Respondents picture their elders to have lived closer to their surroundings, family and neighbors, and leading a less stressful and simpler life. On the negative side their life was characterized by hard work, rigid social rules (gender roles, housewife system), poverty, less material wealth, rigid social stratification, war-time experiences and bad health. Elements linked to sustainability are closeness to nature, less energy use, less material consumption, locally produced goods, no pollution, and more homemade possessions and products.

Modern technology, education, spare time, travels, less rigid social stratification (gender roles, social mobility), "individualization" and material wealth are stressed as characteristics of contemporary lifestyles. Respondents locate themselves as "global", i.e. IT and traveling connects people (implicitly increasing the awareness of others). Explicit remarks made on sustainability are more cars, pollution, electronic devices, material consumption, and higher levels of energy and resource use. The respondents feel contemporary everyday life is more stressful; complex social relations and stressful work situations affect work, family life and leisure time. As a result, as traditional community values lose their grip, social contacts become central, but at the same time more complicated and uncontrollable (cf. Bråkenhielm 2005). Modern industrial and technological production and consumption seem relevant for respondents' attitude towards today's energy and resource use. During the 1950s and 1960s Sweden worked hard to become the most modern nation in the world. During these decades, there was an unprecedented growth of the standard of living, including a relatively affluent working class. There were new scales of consumption and leisure, as present in the respondents' answers, and shorter working hours, more pay, and a rapid migration from the countryside to urban centers as national industries were relocated. Blueprints for the welfare state were put into practice (Löfgren 2000).

Most respondents envision their future along three overlapping social dimensions: 1. interesting job (well paid, interesting work tasks) 2. Family (with or without children) 3. Bigger apartment or house owners (suburban, countryside, outside larger city). Preferences for more spare time and socializing could mean more time for travels, activities with impact on levels of sustainability. Three aspects stand out related to worst case scenarios: 1) social isolation 2) being homeless, followed by bad housing and too small, 3) being unemployed (not afford a place to live, food etc.).

### Swedish young adults care for traditional family values and interesting jobs

Interestingly, many respondents envision their future in ways similar to traditions of self-ownership as house-owners and the nuclear family as an ideal way of living. This is a sharp contrast to their current way of living. Several respondents mention living close to family, friends, nice neighbors and well-paid and/or interesting job as part of their ideal way of living. Several cultural, historical and political aspects are worth bearing in mind considering these preferences. Given that two-thirds of the respondents live in small or medium-size towns and that our sample mainly consists of students we have to consider Swedish history of family politics and cultural norms of family tradition. Social scientist Lucas Forsberg has researched Swedish middle-class parents (2009), possibly comparable to our sample, and claims that the ideal of the “dual earner/dual career family” follows the family politics proposed by the Social Democratic government since the late 1960s, when this ideal was made the norm in Swedish legislation and policy. Given that respondents’ answers resonate with this norm and that they are either close to or at the average age for becoming parents this was expected. Recently, this cultural norm has been manifested as the ideal of middle-class parents and families (Forsberg 2009). Holding a university degree, as a large portion of our sample either do or are on their way to obtain, acclaim them as feasible holders of such an ideal. Also, ethnologist Annette Rosengren (1991) has pointed out that given the large portion of Swedes living in small or medium-sized towns (also present in our sample), family norms and gender roles have historical roots in traditional agricultural society where men and women were supposed to complement each other.

*“It depends a lot on the world economy, I guess. Hopefully we share our resources better and live a lot simpler. No more capitalism” (F, 24-29).*

*“A house with a big garden, together with my partner, our future children, [and] his mother. Working 80% not too far away from home, doing something I really enjoy, and be healthy and in balance” (F, 24-29).*

### Expressions on sustainability in everyday life: private and global concerns

Swedish respondents think about elements explicitly related to sustainability, and among these are preferences for owning electric cars, eco-fuelled cars, “public transport equals fewer cars”, and fewer emissions. Also, suggestions like people going together

and “car pool” are mentioned as hypothetical changes in future mobility. Answers suggest there is an underestimated political energy given respondents’ talk about their feelings about the good of public transport:

*“I dislike that the public transport e.g. the bus is so expensive, it’s almost cheaper to go by car and then you can go whenever you want. The public transport isn’t planned together with other transports like train and boat departures and arrivals; it’s always long waiting hours” (F, 18-23).*

Good environment, environmentally friendly houses, “simpler life”, and “collective living” are mentioned as future ideals connected to sustainability. “Passive house”, gender equality, social equity, health, peace, a “global we”, war, global problems, capitalism as risk factor, pollution, crime, health (private and general), poverty, no democracy, modern life as threat to the environment, overpopulation, and corporate control are preferences with resonances of sustainability on broader terms. None of the respondents mentioned “environmental”, “sustainability” or something equivalent in their job descriptions. In spite of this fact, next to reducing poverty, fighting environmental degradation is the most important global priority according to the Swedish respondents.

Considering the sense of global reflexivity (poverty, war, pollution) in combination with private concerns about family, friends and respondents’ own sense of insecurity, unemployment, health and so on, some culture scientists have characterized Sweden as a society with a wide “moral universe” (Shalom 2007). One aspect of this “universalism” comes to the fore while considering “equality thinking”, and an environmental consciousness as expressed by respondents in our sample. According to ethnologist Tom O’Dell (1997) Swedish culture is constituted by a deep concern for the Environment. Also, in an international survey conducted in 1985 young people aged 18-24 were asked what they were most proud of in their countries, and, unlike for example their American or Japanese counterparts who emphasized their national heritage, young people in Sweden put nature on the top of the list followed by “the welfare state” (cf. discussion in Löfgren 1999). The relationship between increased levels of global awareness and risk consciousness in the Scandinavia, including Sweden, is further developed by Anthropologist Hylland Eriksen (2006) who argues that technological modernization and control (also in everyday life such as family, work and leisure



time) includes that our wellbeing is connected to an ever greater belief in technology's promises for reducing risk in life. For Swedes this could be expressed in risk perceptions such as presented in the survey-sample and the fact that Sweden is a wealthy (post-) industrial nation. New information technology is a big contributor in this aspect.

## PERCEIVED BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOBILITY, FOOD AND HOUSEKEEPING.

In this part of the article we will present respondents' perceived behaviors and attitudes towards the three areas of mobility, food and housekeeping. First, there is a short description of everyday life for each area. Second, we present respondents' reflections on sustainability while talking about scenarios.

### Computer aficionados with preferences for biking to the closest supermarket

Biking to school/work is the most common way to move around according to the respondents, followed by walking and public transport. It is valued as good exercise *and* good for the environment. The prominent role given to the bicycle could be explained taking into consideration variables such as age, standard of living, and the urban lifestyle characterizing the sample. Cars are enjoyed for convenience aspects and lack of good public transport. This includes critique of time schedules, prices, and stops/locations. Public transport is mentioned as a rational choice made for its good environmental aspects, while underdeveloped public transport is a key motivator for choosing the car. Car-driving is related to both positive values such as freedom and convenience, and a "necessary evil" chosen by lack of reasonable alternatives like public transport. In post-war Sweden, dreams of a car society carried messages of liberation from the state and car ownership became a symbol of individual freedom and the capitalist spirit. Thus, an influence of American origin functioned as an undertow to mostly nationalized train systems and roads, and cars connoted free enterprise (Löfgren 2000).

*"Surfing on the internet and watching TV or movies on my computer. Webcam via Skype. cooking with my microwave or with my electric stove, talking on my cell phone, using the washing machine" (M, 18-23).*

Most respondents buy their food at the closest local supermarket (Swedish chain stores ICA, Hemköp, and Coop) and are dependent on the local supermarket's

range of products. Price is the top priority for respondents' choice of food, but is followed by strong preferences for buying *organic* and *ecological products* (it outnumbers quality). Expanding supply of eco- and fair-trade products could amount for shifts towards more sustainable food consumption. But, price is still a top priority and needs to be considered. Even though our sample shows high levels of preferences for organic and fair-trade products, research says that the bias between wanting and actually buying certified food is quite big (Micheletti 2003). Healthy, fresh food and a good selection (i.e. variety) of products influence choice of food products. Respondents being young adults surely influence their choice of store, their limits connected to price range and transport alternatives, and higher levels of environmental consciousness.

Everyday use of Internet/computers, watching TV and cooking are the three top activities in the housekeeping area. Together with high levels of use of electric stoves this point towards high levels of energy use. Also, preferences for shower/bath highlight an implicit source of energy-use. To socialize with family and friends, and reading are often mentioned and could point towards more sustainable alternatives amongst practices with high levels of energy use. Often the use of water (showering, bathing, and doing dishes) is not limited by property owners, and tenants can exploit this without any measures being taken.

## RESPONDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY WHILE TALKING ABOUT THE SCENARIOS

### Food

Many respondents chose the Vegetable Bag Subscription whilst highlighting the scenario's "win-win" situation: local producers increase their efforts combined with a more healthy, environmentally friendly and easy access of fresh food. The vegetable bag scenario is linked with concerns about *time-aspects*. Knowledge of food origin, reduced transport, and easy access to eco-/local food are important aspects for choosing this scenario. This is often combined with *comfort as part of change* toward more sustainable choices in everyday life. This resonates well with transformations towards more sustainable choices with quick solutions. In all the food-scenarios the risk of losing one's individual choice as a consumer seems to scare off respondents leaning towards "individualized" consumer choices.

*VEGETABLE BAG SUBSCRIPTION: "No, cooking is kind of a hobby for me and I don't want recipes and notes on how to and what to cook every day. But on busy days it's really convenient" (F, 24-29).*

*"It's good for the environment to go by bike, but people are lazy so they prefer the car. And when you have more than one kid to travel with it is easier to take the car and you can take a couple of bags with you too" (F, 18-23).*

Our analysis of respondents' socioeconomic context shows only relevant differences between small-medium sized towns and respondents living in larger towns, where city-dwellers are more negatively leaning towards the vegetable bag scenario. Respondents suggested improvements for the "Vegetable Bag Subscription" and they prefer a variety of vegetables to choose from; the possibility to put meat in the bag; and the problem of the Swedish climate needs to be considered. There is an interesting tendency to move away from government/State towards individuals and the private sector being actors to allocate the work. This is interesting regarding the Swedish context, where strong affiliations between the State and citizens historically have been a common solution.

### Mobility

Regarding the bicycle scenario respondents' express benefits in terms of sustainability as a preferred alternative to using cars and busses. Also, low personal costs (insurance, fuel etc.) and accessibility are mentioned as attractive aspects in this scenario. Bicycling is highlighted as good for one's personal health, a trend that would fit together with sustainable lifestyles, as it works on both personal and collective levels. Comments for car-scenarios are positive for sustainability related issues: eco-friendly, socially attractive (to go shopping, transport family), and reduction of numbers of individually owned cars. Respondents are anxious about the car-sharing scenario's contribution towards sustainability, as they think people won't change their mobility-habits and don't want to share their car with others.

*BICYCLE CENTER: "They are aware of the benefits. I live in Sweden, and we usually don't like to socialize with strangers. I think most people would find it difficult to have 3-4 others that they don't know in a crowded space early in the morning" (F, 24-29).*

Laziness is mentioned as a difficulty, and the "social/symbolic" powers of the car is a strong reason for owning a car. Government and private/business stand out as the ones' responsible for taking action in the car-scenarios. This presents a strong trust in technocratic and/or

government solutions on the more costly alternatives such as car-owning. Also, several respondents' comments refer to *corporate responsibility* and show a critical awareness against corporations.

There is a gendered bias in the sample towards women's appreciation of the bicycle scenario, and small town residents tend to choose this scenario. Larger town residents among respondents' tend to choose the car-sharing scenario. There is a small gender bias towards men (aged 24+). This is not surprising considered aspects such as work commuting etc.

### Housekeeping

"Urban composting" was the most appreciated scenario in this area. The connection between waste sorting and sustainability is identified in the sample. Easy access, neighborhood "feel good" and eco-friendly were shared concerns among the respondents. Aspects such as neighborhood cleanliness are deemed promising. Recycling waste is an established "everyday practice" in Sweden and the scenario fits nicely with everyday practice. Recycling as a responsible act towards Nature resonates with the Swedes' interest in the well-being of the environment. Both government and municipality are mentioned as important sponsors of this scenario, but individual responsibility is considered as prime mover.

Preferences for urban composting is consistent with larger town residents and respondents with high education, and therefore might clash with interests of small-medium sized town dwellers with a lower value on the educational scale. The urban composting scenario was mainly appreciated by men living in larger cities, and with high education. No one in the sample recognizes the risk of highlighting this scenario as the most promising scenario, without mentioning the really high-risk behavior concerning mainly middle class consumption habits. The risk is that people conflate a clean, nice neighborhood with sustainable lifestyles. In the housekeeping category the scenario "energy management" was rejected for reasons that it appears as complicated, dependent on larger department complexes, and that it was too individualistic. Some traditionally expressed reliance on technological rationality and efficiency among Swedes, together with a trust in the State as prime mover in this area shines through in these rejections.

### TALKING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Most respondents feel they are well informed on environmental sustainability, and are more interested in going from being informed to contribute in a positive

way (i.e. reduce unsustainable climate change) and solutions that most people could adjust to in their everyday life. School, media and TV are informing on these issues on a regular basis in Sweden. To support possibilities for changing lifestyle patterns in accordance with already established sustainable values/knowledge is one important future task. General information together with everyday solutions (light bulbs, switch off electric devices, environmental impact of TVs and computers etc.) would probably induce lifestyle changes, since several respondents define "sustainability" as "low energy use", "environmental consciousness", "think environmentally", and "being aware of consequences". Interestingly, there are also several comments on consumption-related aspects; i.e. the level of consumption: "no over consumption", "consume as little as possible" and "recycling". Broad definitions reflect values related to sustainability in wider terms, such as: "social rights", "no overconsumption – other values in life", "solidarity", "equity", "being aware" and "less individualistic". But, also technocratic and political values are represented in the sample, for example:

*"When it comes to environment, I leave that to the scientists" (M, 18–23).*

*"Reduce the power of neoliberal market hegemony through engaging in alternative trading and politics" (M, 30–35).*

Sustainability is expanding from "environment/climate" towards correlations including everyday lifestyle and issues such as peace, social rights, democracy and levels of consumption. This could become part of government policies for school/education for developing an ecological-systemic understanding of sustainable lifestyles. Many respondents express interest in less energy-consuming electronic devices and low-energy bulbs in their homes. Similar concerns emerge considering less car-use and more biking as changes that respondents feel they are ready for. Generally, there are rather high levels of trust in technocratic solutions like "low-energy solutions". This calls for an increased level of education and a holistic understanding on the impacts of production and consumption levels in affluent countries like Sweden. There are indicators for lowering the levels of consumption and buying less clothes and meat that seem promising considering the otherwise common mistake of linking "sustainability" to technological progress and technocratic solutions.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – SPEARHEADS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Most respondents feel they are already well informed on sustainability; they are concerned about possibilities to go from being informed to contributing in a positive way (i.e. reduce unsustainable climate change); *respondents ask for solutions adjustable to everyday life*. Clearly, disseminating information on sustainability is not enough to induce lifestyle changes.
- Sustainability is expanding from being equal to the "environment" towards including issues such as peace, social rights, democracy and levels of consumption. This could be part of *government policy discussions and school/education for developing an ecological-systemic understanding of sustainable lifestyles*.
- There is an underestimated political energy about the perceived good of public transport; this is a *source of political engagement that could be tapped into from local, regional and national political officials* for organizing these issues as matters of concern.
- There are several comments on direct consumption-related aspects; i.e. the general level of consumption; which call for *further research and public debate on consumer habits*. Our survey-results shows that understanding transitions toward sustainable consumption practices calls for further in-depth studies and qualitative research on the dispersed social organization of everyday life, including conflicting values, multiple moral incentives, and the endurance of already incorporated (unsustainable) habits.

## REFERENCES

- Aléx, P (2003) *Konsumera rätt - ett svenskt ideal: behov, hushållning och konsumtion*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Bråkenhielm, C-R (2005) "Naturen tar över rollen som vår nya religion" in *Svenska Dagbladet* 20050717
- Campbell, C (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Eckerberg, K & Forsberg, B (1998) "Implementing agenda 21 in local government: The Swedish Experience", in *Local Environment*, 3:3,333 — 347

- Eriksson-Treter & Hodacs (2004) Konsumenten, producenten, medborgaren och staten: några konsumentpolitiska perspektiv på efterkrigstiden i Sverige och USA, in *Historisk tidskrift*, Nr 2004:2. Stockholm.
- European Union indicator (2005) (available at [europea.eu.int/comm/economy\\_finance/indicators/businessandconsumersurveys\\_en.htm](http://europea.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/indicators/businessandconsumersurveys_en.htm) 2006-02-26)
- Gullestad, M (1989) "Nature and Everyday Life in Scandanavia". *Folk* 31:171-181.
- Eriksen, Hylland T (ed.) (2006) *Trygghet*. Norge: Universitetsforlaget
- Isenhour, C (2008) *Theorizing "Sustainable" Consumers: the Continued Relevance of Culture* (unpublished draft, University of Kentucky)
- Jörby, S, A (2002) Local Agenda 21 in Four Swedish Municipalities: A Tool Towards Sustainability?
- *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 45(2):219-244.
- Lindvall J.& Sebring J (2005) "Policy Reform and the Decline of Corporatism in Sweden".
- *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 5, 1057 – 1074
- Löfgren, O (1999) *On Holiday: A Tourist History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Löfgren, O (2000) The Disappearance and return of the national: the Swedish Experience 1950 – 2000, in *Folklore, Heritage Politics and Ethnic Diversity. A festschrift for Barbro Klein*. Botkyrka, Sweden: Mångkulturellt Centrum
- Micheletti, M (2003) *Political Virtue and Shopping: Individuals, Consumerism, and Collective Action*. New York: Palgrave.
- Mörck, M (1998) *Spel på ytan: en bok om livsstilar*. Göteborg, Sweden: Etnologiska Föreningen i Västsverige
- O'Dell, T (1998). Junctures of Swedishness: Reconsidering Representations of the National. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, vol. 28, s20-37
- Rosengren, A (1991) *Två barn och eget hus: om kvinnors och mäns världar i småsamhället: en etnologisk studie*. Stockholm: Carlssons
- Rothstein, B (1988) "State and Capital in Sweden: The Importance of Corporatist Arrangements", *Scandinavian Political Studies* 11, 235-260.
- Schwartz, S H (2007). Universalism Values and the Inclusiveness of Our Moral Universe. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 38; 713-718.
- Veblen, T (1994) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Dover
- Vogel, J, Amnå, E, Munck, I & Häll, L (2003) *Föreningslivet i Sverige. Välfärd, socialt kapital, demokratiskola*. Statistiska centralbyrån 2003
- Wessling, U (1983) "Leva nära naturen": om innebörden av det underförstådda i gröna vågens budskap", in *Svenska livsstilar: om naturen som resurs och symbol*. Hjort, A (red) 1983 Stockholm, Sweden: Liber förlag



# UK Youth: The conflicts of contemporary lifestyles

## United Kingdom: 330 participants

Bronwyn Hayward, Tim Jackson, David Evans  
RESOLVE, University of Surrey; University of Manchester

*The UK GSSL survey reveals deep-rooted tensions between young people's aspirations for the 'good life' and their attitudes towards sustainability. To some extent these tensions play out as a conflict between expectations of material success and dreams of a sustainable lifestyle. A significant proportion of 'green dreamers' offered strong visions of self-sufficiency and sustainability. But these aspirations rarely figured in the respondents' concrete life plans. The latter seemed rather to be driven by fears around financial insecurity and loss of agency or freedom. Responses also suggest a deeper challenge emerging within the lives of young people in the UK: how to ensure that the pursuit of progress doesn't undermine the conditions on which the good life depends.*

## CONTEXT

The social and cultural context in the UK has changed significantly during the lifetime of this sample. The neo-liberal politics of the 1980s were tempered by the incoming Labour government in 1997 through the concept of the 'third way' – an attempt to look 'beyond left and right' and shape market forces more explicitly through social and environmental governance. In spite of these changes and the social shifts that accompanied them, strong remnants of market ideology persist in the UK. A policy of monetary expansion led to rising levels of debt in the UK over the last two decades. Consumer debt was higher than GDP for three years in a row just prior to the 2008 crash and the UK holds the second highest absolute level of external debt in the world behind the US. These policies were certainly influential in creating a 'shopping generation'. The GDP doubled between 1982 – the median birth year of the sample – and 2008. But they also led to increased fears of economic, social and ecological insecurity. The cohort represented by this sample was exposed to increasingly consumerist values and at the same time to a rising awareness of the environmental impacts of material consumption.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SAMPLE

A total of 330 UK respondents took part in this survey. 65% finished at least half the questionnaire and 35% completed the whole survey<sup>83</sup>. The survey was promoted through university email distribution

lists and referrals through social networks<sup>84</sup>. Just over half the respondents (51%) were women. The largest cohort group was aged 18-23 years (61%) and the next largest group was 24-29 year olds (22%). Just under 80% were students; the remainder were young professionals, of whom 4.5% were unemployed. The life satisfaction for the sample was high, at a median of eight out of a possible 10. The students' came from affluent backgrounds: 78% reported that at least one parent was employed in a management or professional position. This affluence may have influenced the political confidence of the sample. Although the median social engagement ranking for the sample was low (four out of a possible 10), over half (53%) of all respondents agreed that 'together people in my neighbourhood can influence local politics'. Overall, the UK respondents made detailed comments about their lives, hopes, dreams and fears, but by comparison, their responses to suggested sustainability scenarios were briefer, suggesting questionnaire fatigue or some resistance to imposed choices.

## INTRODUCING THE RESPONDENTS

Respondents were asked to introduce themselves to a friend they had not seen for a long time. The largest group (26%) emphasized life aspirations, (including career goals and environmental, spiritual social or political values). Beyond this group there were few initial indicators that the respondents might be interested in discussion about sustainable values. Some simply introduced themselves as students or noted hobbies, sports and relationships or friendships. A few mentioned the place where they lived. Given

<sup>83</sup> 13 respondents were excluded from qualitative analysis as resident in alternative countries or outside the target age.

<sup>84</sup> Amongst university respondents, 35% reported they were contacted by the University of Cambridge, 32% by the University of Surrey and a further 10% by Manchester or Cardiff Universities respectively.

the high median life satisfaction, a surprising 23% of respondents commented straight away on lifestyle stress including exam and time pressure; missing friends or family; or worrying they had not found a 'satisfying life goal' or 'purpose' (see text box 1). Only 5% specifically mentioned financial worries. In contrast, over half of those who ranked their life satisfaction very highly (at eight to 10) expressed a sense of life fulfillment, and spoke enthusiastically about their study, career, political causes, spiritual values or relationships.

### 1: Life satisfaction and stress

*"In general very good, and I have few if any complaints with it and feel I have been very fortunate. I am studying a subject I am passionate about, have a good quality standard of living, good relationships with friends and families and I am free and able to live in a way that fits with my tastes and ethics" (M, 18-23, life satisfaction 8).*

*"Waiting for my exam results - I graduate next month! Can't wait for it to be over, I hated my degree and university life. I just want to get out there in the real world and earn my living and do something productive. Remember how I used to talk about wanting to work either on economic and environment issues for the UN or an NGO? Well all those dreams have been squashed out of me. Everyone talks about the credit crunch and no jobs being available and now that I've finished my degree I don't feel qualified for anything without taking post-graduate studies. I'm in enough debt already. I don't want to study the theory anymore I was to get out there and make a difference! That's why I've decided to become a teacher. It will take a couple of years but at least I can gain experience while I train and the learning is more hands-on" (F, 18-23, life satisfaction 5).*

Responses to questions about community engagement revealed contrasting attitudes. Just under half of respondents (49%) made positive or very positive comments about the place where they lived, noting: 'good relations' with 'friendly' neighbours in 'green and quiet', communities which had 'trees' or were 'clean and tidy,' 'safe' or 'nice' with 'local' amenities including parks and shops. Many also enjoyed their university college environment. Nevertheless, over half the respondents (51%) commented *negatively* or very negatively when asked what they *enjoyed* about their neighbourhood. 30% of the respondents expressed frustration they had few opportunities to interact. A further 21% reported experiencing 'no

*community at all*'. Within this latter group, a very small number (n=3), valued privacy and personal space above community. But other respondents lamented lack of opportunities to interact due to long working hours, the transitory nature of student life styles, their 'fortress' like college communities; shyness or racism which they felt prevented interaction, as the following examples illustrate.

*"Ideally I would want to make friends with my neighbours, but (I'm) always out and about I leave home early and get home late, which means I don't see my neighbours at all" (F, 18-23).*

*"I live in a university college, which is a closed community. I like the relaxed and secure atmosphere and social life within the community. It would be nice if the college wasn't as 'fortified' and more open to outsiders" (M, 18-23)*

## SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERYDAY MOBILITY

Of the 235 respondents who answered mobility questions, walking was the most preferred way of getting around for 41% of the respondents, while 30% used a bicycle and 10% regularly used a car. The impact of 'no cars on campus' policies at some universities may have encouraged walking and cycling, but few respondents regularly used a car. The second choice for transport for the majority of this sample was the train, followed by the bus. A significant sub group was internationally mobile, however: 23% of respondents regularly travelled by air, over two thirds had one or two international holidays a year and 20% were international students returning home. Just 5% flew for employment reasons. Respondents were most dissatisfied about the costs of public transport, followed by the lack of infrastructure, (few separate bike lanes and irregular and inconvenient bus routes). The number of cars, risk of accidents, pollution and carrying heavy study bags were other problems for walkers and cyclists. Some women reported feeling unsafe on public transport or walking at night (see text box 2).

Given high bicycle use, it is unsurprising the bicycle loan centre scenario was the preference for the largest group of respondents (n=49) but interestingly fewer than half of these people said they would personally adopt such a scheme (n=22). Other respondents liked the idea but said they may not use it because they already had a bike and/or it did not suit their lifestyle (too unreliable or they lived too far from possible centre sites). Opinions about alternative mobility scenarios were divided: car

sharing was selected by 36 respondents and car pooling by 31 people. Respondents thought local government, universities and bicycle retailers should implement a bike loan scheme.

## 2. Sustainability and mobility choices

*"While still at school, I took the either the train or the bus everyday. Now at Uni, I cycle throughout Cambridge, and generally take the train at the start of term, although at the end of term I am driven back home. Holidays vary between car, ferries and aeroplanes. We only have two holidays a year though" (M, 18-23).*

*"I hate congestion. I HATE IT SO MUCH. I like driving very early in the morning or late night so that I can avoid traffic... or I hate bikes when I'm driving. It causes lots of pain and congestion. (But I also sometimes ride bikes... what can I say..." (F, 18-23).*

## SUSTAINABILITY AND EVERYDAY FOOD EXPERIENCES

Of the 244 respondents who discussed food, the majority shopped in one of the UK's major supermarkets for day to day items. Respondents also reported some shopping in local/independent stores, markets and health food shops. A few respondents (5%) shopped exclusively outside of supermarkets and framed this in terms of a commitment to local, ethical or environmentally sound food choices. Some respondents had food delivered via internet supermarket shopping or through an organic vegetable box scheme. Some students ate at university colleges or at home and did not shop for food.

When making food choices, 37% of respondents reported price, quality and convenience as overriding factors. Additionally, 'healthy food', 'local' food and food that is 'fresh and/or organic' was important for 20% of respondents, but it was unclear whether 'local and organic' food was important on environmental grounds or for health reasons or an attachment to place. There was a strong sense of what might be termed 'ethical consumption' issues amongst 17% of responses (framed as 'fair trade' and a denunciation of 'big business'). There were a small number who reported their dietary requirements as the overriding criterion (vegetarians and vegans). Few talked about the carbon profile of the food they consume however several respondents who were not vegetarians said they wanted to regulate their meat and fish consumption on environmental grounds.

A key theme people enjoyed about food shopping was the experience of doing things 'differently'; 48% of respondents described the pleasures of alternative retail spaces other than supermarket shopping, as a break from the ordinary and/or facilitating a degree of social interaction. For 3% of respondents the appeal was attachment to locality and the enjoyment of leisurely browsing and wandering around:

*"I like being able to pop in and out of lots of different shops, and having a chat with people in them, keeping in touch with how people are and what's going on in the community" (F, 18-23).*

Amongst all respondents, 33% specifically said the thing they *liked most* about shopping was having 'choice'. This was common to those who valued supermarkets and those who valorised alternative retail spaces. Several respondents enjoyed finding new things to eat and novelty and experimentation in both cooking and eating. Asked what they would like to *change*, 11% said they would like to consume food more 'ethically' both in terms of the criteria applied in purchasing and in terms of where they shop, but were constrained by their current circumstances (not having enough money or not being in full control of their food shopping). While price, quality and convenience mattered; respondents reported that they would make exceptions for ethical issues. This worked both ways; those who said ethical and environmental criteria mattered, would make exceptions for price, quality and convenience.

*"I would like for it to be easier to buy local produce - Tesco seems to be taking over, and although it is convenient for me to shop there, it will be a shame when all of the smaller shops are forced out of business" (F, 24-29).*

It is interesting that a Vegetable Bag scenario (buying a box of preselected seasonal food direct from local farmers), was the option preferred by the largest group of respondents (n=58) because only half of this group said they would adopt this scheme themselves (n=29), the remainder were unsure. Barriers to adoption included: the small number of people who cook (see home life), the value people placed on having flexibility and choice and possible problems with delivery given long hours at work or college housing. Respondents were unsure who should implement the scheme- suggesting 'farmers, supermarkets, councils and "government.' The second most popular scenario choice was urban gardens, (n=48), followed by a family take away meal (n=40).

*"I think that this is a feasible plan which would provide healthy food easily and conveniently. I like fresh fruit and veg and would love to be able to support local farmers, but it's just not convenient for me at the moment. If these bags were available at a supermarket I'd buy them" (M, 18-23)*

### SUSTAINABILITY OF HOME LIFE

This was an overwhelmingly 'e-connected' group. Of the 258 respondents who discussed what activities and appliances they used in the home, 76% reported using a computer most often. The computer plays a central lifestyle role and is used for keeping in touch with friends and family, watching TV and listening to music as well as work or study. It was not possible to separate work use and entertainment uses. However a further 8% said watching a television set (as opposed to watching TV on computer) was what they did most often at home while 6% said cooking. One third of the sample lived in university colleges, reducing cooking opportunities, yet cooking was the second most frequently nominated activity for 14% of the sample (on gas or electric hobs, ovens or microwaves) along with listening to the radio for another also 14% (see text box 3).

#### 3. Home life

*"I use my computer for keeping in touch with family and friends, as well as to watch films and listen to the radio. I also do my shopping online. On average I spend about 2-3 hours a day using my computer. I use the washing-machine once, sometimes twice, a week. I spend about 4-5 hours a month on the phone. I use a gas stove/oven every other day for about 30mins, and I use the microwave once or twice a week. I Hoover my room every three-four weeks. I use the hair-dryer for about 15 minutes every other day" (F, 18-23).*

While no one said that talking or socializing was the activity they *did most often* at home, spending time with family or friends was the *favourite* home based activity of 17% of the sample. A further 17% enjoyed reading books, while 30% most enjoyed watching TV or using electronic media (listening to music or catching up with friends). A smaller group, 12% said cooking was their favourite activity and the remainder enjoyed hobbies (crafts or playing music) or getting outside into the garden or neighbourhood for relaxation and exercise. Overall, 19% of the sample reported feeling very satisfied with their home life and would not change anything. However home was less satisfactory for others and here again personal stress was discussed. Many respondents said they would

like to something about their home life including: reducing stress, socialising with more people, getting fitter, making more time for leisure activities, reducing the time they spent on electronic media, sharing home chores better and spending more time outside). Three respondents raised serious mental health issues when talking about home life, for example:

*"(I wish) that sometimes I don't get depressed and cut myself. That I could remember information more easily" (F, 18-23).*

A small group wanted to make physical changes to their lives. These included: switching to sustainable energy sources, securing home ownership or reducing commuting time. Reducing water use, less noise, and eating less meat was mentioned by very small number. Given the emphasis on changes to human relationships and stress, the 'sustainable housekeeping' scenarios offered in the survey did not appear to meet the concerns of these respondents, who largely preferred urban composting and energy management scenarios. The main motivation for the energy management scheme was to 'save money' and the primary reason for choosing urban composting was familiarity with the idea. When comparing support for both schemes, there was more unequivocal support for the 'quick, easy', money saving option of energy management. Few wanted a laundry scheme; many shared a college laundry, and resented lugging baskets or invasion of privacy (see text box 4).

#### 4. Changes to home life

*"For internet not to be my main point of my social life" (M, 24-29).*

*"My house is too cold and humid. I sometimes wish my housemates were home more, to have some company" (F, 18-23)*

*"I wish that I had more free time to enjoy simple pleasures like taking a bath but due to my hectic work schedule this is often impossible" (F, 18-23).*

*"I would like to be able to say that our power came from a reliable, environmentally-friendly source" (M, 18-23).*

### LOOKING BACK: THE CONFLICTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Amongst the 217 people who answered questions about the quality of their lives compared to their grandparents', responses were surprising mixed. Slightly over half (54%) suggested that on balance



their grandparents had a poorer quality of life compared to their own. This group felt life was 'harder' and more 'constrained' (especially for women) in the past, and that their grandparents lacked comparable opportunities for higher education or career choice, suffered the hardship of war and rationing, experienced more social intolerance or had fewer opportunities to travel. In contrast 33% of respondents felt their grandparents had better quality lives than their own. These people commented on a 'slower', 'less stressful' pace of life; 'better social interaction' with more 'face to face' communication, 'fewer material aspirations', a simpler and 'healthier outdoor life' with more 'local and home grown food'. The remainder of respondents were unsure if their grandparents had a better or worse quality lives (see text box 5).

**5. Comparing our grandparents' lives**

*"All I can say is I'm glad I wasn't them. My grandfather left school without qualifications and lied about his age to join the army. All four of my grandparents' lives were quite strongly affected by WW2 - my other grandfather was in hiding for several years. I'm glad that I live in a far more progressive society, especially for women - not being tied to the home and having more technology to help with chores" (M, 18-23).*

*"Unrecognisable in the trappings (technology/ media etc) but I think they had a lot of the same concerns and dreams that I have, even if the specifics differ. Two things that I think have changed a lot are female liberation (e.g. my grandmother was a nurse, she would never have had the opportunity I do to become a doctor), and also more sexual freedom" (F, 18-23).*

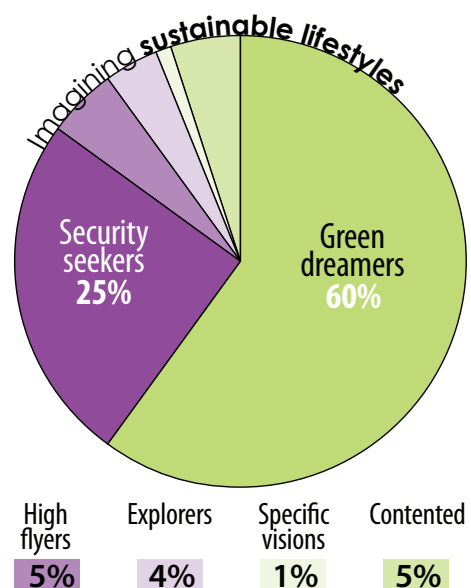
**THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LIFESTYLES IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS**

Of the 235 people who commented about the lifestyle they expect to have in 10 years, responses could be grouped into four clusters. The largest cluster (48%) envisaged a positive life of *material and relationship security*, typically with children. This group did not comment specifically about the environment. Just under a quarter of the respondents (23%) expressed positive visions with *sustainability themes*: flexible working hours and a slower pace of life, the use of technology to enhance quality of life, 'self sufficiency' (lower and self generated energy use, home grown food), more engagement in community life, causes or charities and increased use of public transport in pleasant communities. A further 17%

of the sample expressed *strongly negative images of their future*, anticipating increased social isolation or stress, longer working hours and little control over life choices. A small number specifically mentioned declining environmental quality or financial insecurity. The remainder (12%) saw no change or declined to answer

**IMAGINING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**

Respondents were also asked about their ideal ways of living and 214 people responded revealing five different but related ideal visions (see figure). The largest group we describe as green dreamers; respondents who aspired to live with more environmental value by 'retreating' to 'country' or 'small town' or a 'green environment' with 'space', access to 'nature' and fresh air' and a local community (60%). Within the green dreamers' group a significant cluster want to live 'self sufficiently' or 'self-sustainably', including generating their own energy, or in some sense withdrawing to 'the country'. Equal numbers of women and men shared this vision. Some wanted a more 'relaxed pace of life' and others wanted to live in more 'engaged communities'. In total therefore, the majority of the sample imagined living in ways that accord with sustainable values. A further 25% of respondents we describe as security seekers, individuals who stressed the need for financial security, a relationship, a home and/or a family. Within this cluster, respondents said they wanted to be 'comfortable but not rich' - income appeared to facilitate freedom of choice, stability and independence. A career was a form of personal fulfillment, (29 'security seekers' were female, 25 were male). Only a few (5%) aspired to a 'high flying city life' of high incomes and wide choices for leisure



pursuits. The fourth small but distinctive group (4%) aspired to a lifestyle of exploration and travel with several also commenting that they wanted to limit their impact on the environment, 7 'explorers' were women and 2 men. Travel was a form of adventure, discovery and learning. The remainder said they were content to be living as they are now or had specific visions (e.g. 'accessibility better everywhere' if disabled).

## FEARING THE WORST

Amongst the 211 respondents' who commented on their *worst* ways of living, six interrelated fears were identified. The largest cluster of respondents (34%) feared loss of freedoms including: human rights, loss of the ability to effect change or agency, loss of the opportunity to fulfill their potential or live by their own values including spiritual values. Secondly, 20% of respondents feared social isolation, (being far removed from family, friends or loved ones or unable to interact with them due to long hours at work or commuting). Thirdly, 18% of respondents feared loss of financial security and home (18%). A fourth cluster of fears concerned fear of the environment degrading (13%). This fear was largely set in an urban context. Concerns were often expressed about being 'stuck' in the 'middle' or 'centre' of big, 'crowded and polluted' cities with no access to green space. Fifthly, 8% of the sample feared physical insecurity such as war famine or drought, while 6% feared time and work pressure.

A common thread woven through all these fears was the concept of loss of freedom. For example amongst those who feared environmental degradation, well over half used images of being trapped, in cramped, crowded, living. Being denied access to green space became a symbol of lost access and opportunity. Similarly, one third of those who feared physical insecurity went on to describe this in terms of having 'no choice' in a 'war' or 'dictatorship'. Nearly a quarter of those who feared financial insecurity, framed this in terms of being dependent, with no choices or opportunity. Moreover, 15 of the 42 people who feared social isolation described this isolation as being 'stuck', or 'trapped'. If these comments are collated, the majority feared a significant loss of freedom or agency (being able to effect change in desired directions). This loss of freedom seemed to limit opportunity for fulfillment and the ability to effect change.

## TALKING ABOUT WHAT SUSTAINABILITY MEANS

Respondents were asked to comment on how informed they felt about sustainability and climate change. Nearly all of the 103 respondents felt well informed and said they did not need the additional information provided in the survey (n=97). Only one person did not believe in the climate threat, and three people said the information was inadequate. Only seven people felt the information provided changed their views, (largely reinforcing their concerns). When asked, to define sustainability, two types of responses were identified. For a small but distinct group (9%) defined sustainability as *providing for oneself* and ones' own needs, defining sustainability as *self sufficiency*:

*"Sustainable living for me is trying to keep everything as 'local' as possible. Growing your own fruit and veg where possible, not going on holiday abroad, in other words not taking from the earth what you can't help to put back. Using as little fossil fuel energy as possible, and trying to be as self sufficient as possible, not relying on imported goods" (F, 18-23).*

The second more common definition (91 %) defined sustainability as living within limits, conscious of the impacts of decisions on others or the environment:

*"Aware of its surroundings. Aware of the consequences of the choices made and therefore makes the choices that do the least harm. Involves more than just care for the environment - it also thinks about people and community. Involves thinking about health, well-being, educational development, rather than just money and possessions" (F, 24-29).*

Respondents talked about not using resources 'wastefully' and thinking about future generations or in longer time scales. Many mentioned using renewable resources or recycling, and consuming less. A few individuals commented on reducing green house gases, or living a spiritual and less fast paced life.

Of the 102 people who offered suggestions for immediate actions towards sustainability, the most popular was to 'reduce home energy use', including better home insulation (32%). However just under half of those who recommended energy use changes were in shared university or rented accommodation,

making implementation difficult for individuals. The next most popular action was increasing use of 'public transport' and 'decreasing air travel', (16%), growing food or eating more vegetarian meals (12%) and reducing consumption or buying local seasonal food (11% respectively). A few said recycling, contributing to charities or environmental causes and a slower life.

## THE CONFLICTS OF LIVING SUSTAINABLY IN THE UK

In summary, the respondents reflect the conflicts and tensions faced by many young people in the United Kingdom who wrestle with the benefits as well as its burdens of development. Many valued the choices, freedoms and opportunities of their current lifestyle, including travel and communication. On the other hand they expressed concern about living far from their families and friends and the stress of busy lives. Though there was little indication of this in the early part of the survey, over half of all respondents turned out to have latent 'green dreams' of a better environment and closer community. However their green *dreams* did not feature strongly in their 10 year *plans*.

Those respondents most satisfied with their lives found fulfillment through careers, study and relationships. Many spoke movingly about their desire to effect change. Yet the suggested sustainability scenarios appear to have fallen short of these high aspirations and a significant minority appeared to resent being given scenario options. This resistance can be understood in light of the high value this sample placed on freedom and choice. One respondent put the case most strongly:

*"I know this stuff anyway, and yet still the scenarios seem pathetically trivial in the global context"*  
(F, 30-35).

The results of this survey suggest that respondents who are motivated by a sense of agency, and who seek a life purpose may be less inspired by a *tool kit of discrete actions*, and more motivated by opportunities to make significant changes through alternative, lifestyle *pathways*, travelled with others, towards both a sustainable future and greater personal fulfillment.

# Vietnamese Youth in the Paradox of Transition: How Concerns and Expectations Might Inspire Sustainable Practices

**Vietnam: 546 participants**

Dang Thi Anh Nguyet, Do Thi Huyen, Hoang Thanh Tam,  
Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, Nguyen Thanh Thuy

The Centre for Development of Community Initiative and Environment (C&E), Vietnam

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Vietnamese young have grown up in complicated and shifting economic, political and social contexts. The overall reform after the 1980s socio-economic crisis saw a reduction of state control over the economy and society along a widening international relationship with non-communist countries (Brown, 1995). In due course, foreign businesses and organisations, including non-governmental ones arrived and set up their operations besides local ones. The labour market became legitimate in the process and civil society, including that for environmental protection and sustainability gradually took roots (Thayer, 2009). Social and economy recovery in the 1990s brought about improvement in income and material wealth and opportunities for the labour force and their families, including better education, health care and employment prospects. However, social stratification, inequity, corruption and poor governance, social ills and environmental pollutions increased, along with instability from the economy and society (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006). More seriously, Vietnam has overused its resources and is facing the threat of a long-term decrease due to this in-sustainability (The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, The World Bank, & The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2005). This is, given a rapid growing population that was over 86 million and a GDP per capital at 1000 USD by 2008 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2010).

These complicated and shifting circumstances put the Vietnamese youth in a paradox with two extreme perspectives: one of a bright future of wealth and happiness and the other of daunting social disruption. Material improvements are accompanied with negative aspects of development. Messages from society are contradictory and confusing (Doan, 2005). In the mass media, western consumption featured

most with various products and styles for a 'hot' or popular image of successful individuals' life. The key to this consists of good salaries, beautiful and luxurious clothing, house, and car besides a happy and supportive family. The individuals obtained them through their own study and work, often in business or professions and strong social involvement. These are on the news in parallel with drugs, crimes, abuses, corruption and other social ills, including environmental pollution.

In these contexts, GSSL Vietnam has provided valuable data on life, practices and thinking in relation to environmental issues of a section of young adults, most of them are students from two major cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. Besides an on-line survey, GSSL Vietnam facilitated a number of youth forums as a place for exchange and development of ideas and initiatives towards sustainable lifestyles. As explained below, these youth's life and lifestyles are embedded in their surrounding society. Their concerns and expectations, in turn, point to valuable solutions and policy directions for innovation to make life more sustainable.

## RESPONDENTS' SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND STATE OF MIND

The respondents live with a middle range of amenities of housing, food and travel in Vietnam. The distribution of their parents' professions shows that respondents are from the middle class and have received the cultural and economic capital from their parents through family teaching and orientation as well as education investment (Bourdieu, 2004). As 71.2% respondents are students, it is easy to understand that they mainly rely on family support as a major income source. Some respondents have part-time jobs, often as simple as waiters in restaurants, shop assistants, and home-tutors while studying. Again, these are typical for students in Vietnam, given their limited time and the high competition in the labour



market that prevent them from obtaining high-skilled jobs (Pham, 2000). Besides financial support, familial relations have great influence in term of housing and cultural capital. 45.6% respondents shared accommodation and meals with their families.

Respondents' relationship with their peer groups is strong as 68.9% study in universities and 26.2% live with their friends. This is common in Vietnam, particularly for young people who live away from home for study and work. Over 60% respondents are involved in social organisations. 35.5% selected youth, sport clubs or outdoor activities club, cultural/musical/dance/theatre organisations, a high rate probably due to that the importance of the Communist Youth, which many students hold membership, and that has been part of the Regime's authorised political organisations since 1945. Less than 18% selected peace, humanitarian, community service or human rights organisations and environmental or sustainable development organisations. Less than 10% respondents have membership with residents or neighbourhood organisations and trade union/consumer organisations. This might be because these organisations have just developed recently with little popularity. Membership with religious organisations has the lowest percentage (6.4%), which can be related to the historical restrictions that the government places on them.

Despite the above relations, respondents do not seem to have strong community connections. Obviously, many respondents come from other places and live in rented accommodations in the cities. 16.8% respondents have been living for less than one year and 39.6% respondents from one to four years in their local area. Given such short stays and a focus on study/ work, they might not develop strong relations with the communities. Moreover, the house owners are often in control of these relations and might not actively promote this among their renters. This practice is common in Vietnam as part of the Regime's control by household registration and self-organization of living quarters. Respondents have mixed feelings about their neighbourhood as their responses form close-to-normal distributions across the scale of positive-negative feelings.

Overall, respondents are quite satisfied with their current situation and evaluate their life satisfaction quite high with a median of seven on a 0 to 10 scale. This satisfaction is also evidenced in the way respondents compare their present life with their grandparents' life when they were their age.

However, they often describe their everyday life in a very formal way: they tend to down play both the positive and negative issues of their life and try to portray themselves in a normal way. This might be due to Vietnamese cultural practice to hide one's own problems or behave as if one's success or happiness is not worth noted and to give way to community things (H. P. Nguyen, 1998; Phan, 1992).

*"I am so so. My work and study have little stress, but I am trying to adapt to them. Besides these, my life does not have much change" (M, 18-23).*

*"My grand-parents experienced wars so their life was difficult. Now it is peace so life is good. There are good conditions for physical and other development. Similarities: both generations have big ambitions to develop the country" (M, 18-23).*

Respondents observed changes in the Vietnamese society from a poor, socialist society to a richer, consumption society. 33.0% respondents perceived the present to be better, 20.5% thought both the present and the past had their own 'pros' and 'cons', 10.8% described the present and the past as being much different while only 6.8% respondents considered the present worse. They agreed that their grandparents' life was gentle and tranquil but interrupted by wars with rich emotions, close familial and community relationship and little environmental pollution. The living conditions were poor with a lack of housing amenities and proper health care service, poor hygiene, early marriage and more children. Life today has better comfort, material wealth and freedom of choice and advancement and peace. Along a growing and crowded population and a developing economy, however, come more stress, pollution, hazards, worst social relations, less resilient capacity, more calculation and competition. However, respondents perceived that they shared with older generations the aim towards the future and development, good relations and traditions, which are part of a sustainable society.

Respondents' positive attitude towards society was also obvious in their envisioned future. 49.7% think their future in 10 years time would be better in terms of work, income, social status, success, housing, leisure and food for themselves and their family members in a better environment with green trees and less pollution. Only 6.3% feared of worst pollution, busier lifestyles, energy shortage, and bad food, more industrialised and more crowded areas due to population growth, and more diseases. Only 0.6% respondents plan to do some community

service. This implies a focus on the individuals and families and less on community, society and the environment.

The way respondents imagined their ideal ways of living also demonstrate their focus on the individuals and families. 49.5% respondents include in their descriptions good characteristics and good behaviours and purposes of oneself and the community towards each other. Health, material wealth, happiness, crime and drug-free and aims towards future and advancement including social status, knowledge, and income are part of this picture. These are typical of the social perceptions and expectations of a good individual and good life (Dao, 2003). The consumerism that features in these answers also reflects the changes towards a richer, consumption society in Vietnam. Only 10.4% mentioned the environment as a key element in their ideal way of life but most of these people only hope for a green, clean and fresh environment. A few respondents mentioned the need for responsible consumption, care about environmental issues and environmental protection and the next generations.

*"I only wish a happy family and career success. These are good enough. I will lead a happy, healthy and meaningful life. I will have the freedom to think and do things that I want!" (M, 18-23).*

Sustainability stands for a spontaneous and specific demand/ expectation from respondents as a factor of improvement: in this context, it means more choices, at the individual or collective level, and the capacity for people to meet their needs and aspirations for a good quality of life. Socio-economic factors clearly play a central role in the perception of sustainability: the need for life sustaining such as job, income, housing are most important. Only a minority of respondents have expressed concerns about a growing and crowded population and a developing economy with its social and environmental issues. This is a paradox between consumption aspirations and environment and sustainability awareness which began to take roots, as further detailed in the following section.

## **PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOBILITY, FOOD AND HOUSEKEEPING**

The way respondents describe their everyday life in terms of food, mobility and housekeeping is in contradiction with their general satisfaction towards their life and society. They worried, and are even very

critical about poor quality of food, transport, and housing conditions in their living places, referring to many ways of improving them. While some understood their role in these situations, they still follow their daily habits for their conveniences. In term of mobility, for example, most respondents are aware of the traffic pollution and poor traffic conditions which are partially caused by motorbikes. They, however, choose motorbikes and cars/ train for their convenience. They reject bicycles and buses because these vehicles are convenient, not fast, and overcrowded. Few walk or use bicycles. Some want to buy cars or a new motorbike for more convenience and demonstration of their economic success. However, most respondents want better public transport/ better traffic behaviour/ less traffic/ more green trees on the road. Some suggest bio-energy or cheap energy, saving energy and lightweight motorbikes. Some want to switch to bicycles, if it is convenient, for better health.

Most respondents worried about poor food provision and food safety/ hygiene, particularly in outdoor markets. Few are concerned about the environmental impacts of plastic bags. They don't like fast food and want healthy eating. They, however, continue to buy food from outdoor markets given their cheaper prices and short distance. Most wants improved hygiene of markets and food quality. Very few care about the lack of food among poor people and the changing of cooking and eating tradition or impacts of food safety/ hygiene on the community in general.

Most respondents possess and use computer and internet, TV, telephone, including mobile phone, fridge, lights, washing machine, other electricity equipments, and gas cooker. People who rent a house were in a less comfortable condition in term of household equipment. These are indispensable for their in-house life and they stick to these. Because most respondents share house with their families or friends, some find their privacy not respected while others are concerned about problems facing their house members such as hard job, low income, high expenses, bad behaviours, narrow space, noise, and poor hygiene. Respondents often want improvement in term of the material conditions, space and family relations. Few thought of saving electricity, or change their habits for healthier life such as taking outdoor activities.

Respondents understand the sustainability benefits of the scenarios which include the saving, healthy, environmental-friendly, and community-friendly nature of these options. This is common across every

scenario. For some options, respondents point to benefit for the poor: for example, "vegetables bag subscription" ensures works for farmers. Within each category and between categories of mobility, food and housekeeping, the most promising scenarios are **urban gardens** (slow), **bicycle centre** (slow), and **energy management** (quick) with roughly the same support level of 42%, 41%, and 43% respectively. None of the proposed scenarios are significantly rejected by respondents. Most respondents' motivations for their favourite scenarios are for their own benefits which also accompany community benefits. These are savings, good health, productivity, and clean-green-beautiful environment. In this sense, sustainability stands for a perceived benefit and a motivation.

The above motivation and thinking are understandable in the contexts of Vietnamese cities. In particular, family take-away are complicated and not feasible because each person/ families have different tastes, bearing in mind the traditional practices of family meals and low values attached to take-away meals that make family take-away awkward. In addition, there is a growing preference for private choice (Dao, 2003; T. T. Nguyen, 2006). However, some chose family take-away because they are students and used to take-away meals, or they don't have time/ want to spend time on meal preparation. Vegetables bag subscription is not suitable for the poor. Moreover, open, cheap vegetable markets are prevailing in Vietnam and housewives often got to choose and buy their vegetables there.

Car-sharing and car-pooling on demand are not feasible in Vietnam as cars are costly. Bikes are currently the means of transport of some respondents and used to be a common means of transport before. This might contribute to the bike preference of many respondents. Some consider urban composting smelling and unsuitable for cities. They already experienced the dirty conditions in Vietnam cities with litters and waste everywhere. It should be noted that Vietnam is a tropical country with hot temperature and high humidity so rotten organic materials often produce bad smell and are associated with flies which are carrier of diseases. City people are used to the practice of collecting waste to dump elsewhere. The movement of green-clean-beautiful cities is an obvious example of this. People only collect waste, put it in the dustbin and think that in this way, they love and protect the environment. Collective laundry does not apply for the poor who use to do their laundry by hand. Some don't want to use shared washing machines, probably for fear of spreading diseases according to some respondents.

#### ENERGY MANAGEMENT:

*"I found this scenario is suitable for us because energy management is our major concern. The implementation should involved local government, societies and associations and individuals" (F, 24-29).*

The GSSL scenarios fit with respondents' situation. They bring solutions to the needs for saving, given the general economic constraints that respondents are facing. The scenarios meet the needs for healthy, environmental-friendly, family-friendly and community-friendly practices. This is preferable as the Vietnamese appreciate social relations and communities in harmony with the nature (Dao, 2003; Tran, 1999) while the growing economy, urbanisation and industrialisation pose threats to these relations (T. T. Nguyen, 2006).

Respondents' suggestions for improvement and/or development of other innovations/ scenarios reflect expectations of improvement in the public and private sectors and civil society, mass media, and the population in general. In particular, they point to the need to improve law enforcement and legislation, and the low awareness and ignorance of the population. Poor infrastructure is another issue that requires improvement. Respondents expect action from governments and local authorities, civil society, the business sector, and individuals for the development of sustainable innovations. However, most responsibilities are given to the authorities, which might be due to the central role played by governmental institutions in public activities in Vietnam. Individuals are decisive in implementation, but they need to be trained and disciplined by institutions. Some respondents mention the role of professional organisations and professional people and the media in these training/ awareness raising activities.

Respondents' suggestions demonstrate the possible variations of the proposed scenarios that fit Vietnam contexts, given the fact that they are the inhabitants who have good understanding of their situation, problems and practical and feasible solutions. For example, instead of sharing, people can own centres and provide service because public properties are not well preserved in Vietnam. Trial-and-error method is recommended to check applicability. Boxes can be used to plant vegetables, as some people do today. The elders can be engaged in this activity because they have much free time. Clubs are another way to promote activities. For bicycle centre scenario, some respondents suggest to adapt types of bikes to fit various users, to impose taxes on other polluting

vehicles, and to combine bike use with tourism. In terms of the energy option, some respondents propose use of solar energy and clean energy. Respondents also point to the need to involve the government and local mass organisation such as women's unions and residential leaders in promoting sustainability, given their role in society. These suggestions point to opportunities to promote better lifestyles and sustainable development in Viet Nam which the final section will elaborate.

## INFORMATION AND DEFINITIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The survey shows that respondents start to be informed about environmental challenges and are willing to take actions for a better environment<sup>85</sup>. 12.3% respondents of 527 questionnaires show their confidence of being well informed about environmental challenges. Specifically, they said that they were well informed and were confident of their choice before the survey took place. 24.1% of respondents show their eagerness to change their habits and cope with environmental issues once they are informed (through the survey or other environmental education activities). Only 5.3% expressed indifference towards environmental issues.

*"At present, many people are not aware of the situation of the environment. If they know this situation and impacts of the above scenarios, they will adopt them" (F, 18-23).*

Among the 219 respondents who responded questions about levels of environmental awareness and impacts of information, 56.2% thought that people would adopt sustainable scenarios if they knew more about climate change; 32.0% said some would change but some would not while only 9.6% said information would have no impact. Factors that might hinder change include social practices, awareness and ignorance. Remarkably, respondents stressed interests and benefits that might associate with the adaptation of the scenarios and link with other aspects of people's life, particularly their livelihoods, well-being and health. Only 5.3% respondents were indifferent towards environmental issues, explaining that they did not see the need of environmental protection and climate change adaptation.

The 222 respondents who explained what they think makes a way of sustainable living defined sustainability mainly in three ways. One way is to live

a good balance between economic, social and private life objectives of one (50% of responses). This includes, for example, to be aware of one's activities impacts, to have clean eating, air and thinking habits, to live with a purpose, to get social promotion, success and love, to have a happy family and friendships, to live with confidence, knowledge, and awareness. The second way is to be community friendly (35.1% of responses). This definition includes sharing and understanding people and being without social ills. Authorities, organisations, communities, families and individuals are important for living sustainably. The third way is the care and protection of the environment (35.8% of responses). This definition includes ensuring today consumption without affecting the future, to keep the environment clean and tidy, to fight against pollution. Authorities, organisations, communities, families and individuals are also important factors for environmental protection. In these definitions, the following is valued: material wealth, security, family relations, community relations, social status, health, knowledge, awareness and the natural environment.

The respondents use the following words to talk about sustainability: *confidence, knowledge, awareness, status, success, happiness, love, clean, good, stable, safe, presence, future, authorities, community, and family, individual*. However, they did not translate well their definition into everyday actions. They recognised that they have not reached a balanced self, as demonstrated in the food, housekeeping and travelling practices indicated in the second section of the questionnaires. It seems that sustainability is an ideal way of life, or the overall target that respondents aim at but have not actually practiced it.

To match their answers as to what makes a way of living sustainable, respondents offered a range of actions for sustainable lifestyles, which can be categorised in four types. The first three types are related to the environment (57.7%): 1) the use of resources (water, energy) and appliances, including saving energy but also food, water, etc., reducing waste and apply appropriate treatment of waste, planting green trees, and others; 2) consuming differently, including changing bad habits, minimising use of plastic bags, using public vehicles, and buying fresh food; 3) getting engaged with community, for example joint community activities and services, and awareness campaigns on sustainable lifestyles. The fourth type (47.7% responses) is about self achievement, including keeping good health and one's belief firm, acting with consideration, caring about oneself, one's habits, one's family and the community,

<sup>85</sup> The last section of the questionnaire was filled by 41.8% of respondents.



updating and enriching one's understanding and awareness, and being active.

## FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES FOR VIETNAMESE YOUTH

Part of GSSL-Vietnam were three forums on sustainable lifestyles for the young people in Vietnam which C&E organised with cooperation from students and professionals at Hanoi University of Foreign Trade, Hanoi University of National Economics and Hanoi University of Industrial Art in March 2009. These forums, sponsored by Swedish –Vietnamese Programme on Environmentally Sustainable Development Programme, the Department of Science, Education, Natural Resources and Environment of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, provided opportunities for the professional youth to gather, explore, discuss and develop initiatives for sustainable lifestyles and relevant issues.

The forums enabled participants to enrich their understanding of sustainable lifestyles, including sustainable consumption and production and environmental protection. They discuss with professors and experts on hot issues such as solid waste- disposal, recycle, reuse and reduce waste: industrial pollution, tropical ecosystem, and climate change, climate change mitigation and adaptation, poverty and Corporate Social Responsibility. Besides, the forums had a focus on daily issues including food, plastic bags, mobility and communication. There were films on different lifestyles of the youth with different cultures such as how American, Japanese, German and Vietnamese young people live and care about their life, nature and culture. There were materials for participants to reflect on their lifestyles and sustainability and how to improve them. For example, young people would like to learn creative ideas and freedom expression from the American, responsibility and seriousness from Japanese friends, and disciplinary and saving from German friends and politeness from the French.

The forums introduced different solutions for environmental challenges: raising environmental awareness for the public, changing behaviors and starting actions to protect the Earth for our future generations which different groups created or applied in Vietnam or inspired from other countries. This included, for example, the integration of sustainable development and environmental protection into university curriculum, 3R (reduce, reuse, and recycle) activities with eco-bags instead of plastic bags,

the call for scientific research on environment and sustainable development among students and young professionals. There are also initiatives that can be applied into daily life such as energy efficiency, saving and care of the common goods in the university campus, food safety, sanitary and quality of products and prices, and using public transport.

Besides the forums, Pan Nature- an NGO with [thienhien.net](http://thienhien.net) website and networking green volunteers organized a fieldtrip to Hang Kia-Pa Co Nature Reserve in Hoa Binh province, neighbor of Hanoi, on 28-29 March 2009. The trip gathered fifty young volunteers from associated networks, universities and institutions, organizations, including voluntary groups and clubs. Participants learned about the nature reserve, its biodiversity, value and its plan for conservation. They collected, shared information and discussed socio-economic conditions of the local people local culture, identity and local and custom environmental regulations and the community-based conservation in the buffer zone. They shared their experience in working in environmental field. A camp with cultural exchange and games finalized the fieldtrip. The group turned off all lights in order to participate in the Earth Hour campaign. In this way, Pan Nature shared with the participants its expertise on sustainable development and encouraged the participants to take different activities of the voluntary groups and work for a better life.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GSSL-Vietnam offered insights in to the life, practices and thoughts of Vietnamese young students and professionals in relation to sustainability and the environment. It shows they are trapped in contradictory contexts, practices, expectations and ambitions. Although a few respondents were involved in environmental organisations or studies, a majority of them had access to environmental education mainly through mass media and campaigns conducted by environmental organisations, including the GSSL. Its impacts of the survey and the questionnaire are obvious in the increase of environmental-friendly responses.

As most people want life improvement, self achievement and social contributions, there exist opportunities for environmental and sustainable movements. For example, C&E, other NGOs and organisations can mobilise these people in campaigns and other activities with the promotion of values and benefits for themselves, their family and society. One

possible suggestion is that C&E could carry out an opinion survey that targets local and international NGOs and a sustainable living forum for NGOs in Vietnam. These will start changes to awareness and daily habits of these people and their acquaintances toward greater sustainability. Another way is to develop and advocate for inclusion of environmental and sustainable lifestyle interests and concerns in all professions and develop professional groups on these issues. These can be linked with and learn from actions in other countries, for example in Europe where the task force on sustainable lifestyle and consumption was initiated and developed.

Respondents' reactions provide valuable suggestions for suitable and applicable innovation opportunities in Vietnam. For example, they point to cultural practices that might prevent meal sharing. They also point to the role of the government and local organisations such as women's unions and living quarter leaders in promoting various ways to make life more sustainable. Based on these suggestions, groups and organisations can start projects, develop environmental campaigns and movements and advocate policy changes. For example, there might be tests of scenarios in Vietnam. These include, for example, the urban composting in some new urban compound areas (which are newly built and consisted of apartment buildings, villas and separated/ semi-separated or sided houses and are often managed by a housing development company). Some organisations are promoting green mobility and green vegetable bags and these activities might be evaluated. Green gardening is also developed by residents and this might be evaluated as well.

GSSL-Vietnam focused on young students and professional as part of the middle class in urban areas. Its results do not reflect the overall situation and state of mind of Vietnamese youth. The survey can be widened to target other groups in society such as those in rural areas. The survey tools will be adapted so that they can reach other youth groups. The database will be helpful for project development, movement design and implementation and policy advocacy for sustainable lifestyle in Vietnam and possible replication in other countries.

## REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. (2004). The forms of capital. In S. J. Ball (Ed.), *The RoutledgeFalmer reader in sociology of education* (pp. 15-29). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Brown, F. Z. (1995). Vietnam since the war (1975-1995). *Wilson Quarterly*, 19(Winter), 64-84.
- Communist Party of Vietnam. (2006). Documentation of the Xth National Congress. Retrieved from.
- Dang, C. K. (Ed.). (2001). *The he tre Viet Nam: Nghien cuu ly luan va thuc tien* (Vietnamese youth: Theoretical and practical research). Hanoi: Nha xuất bản lao động- xã hội.
- Dao, D.A. (2003). *Viet Nam van hoa su cuong* (History of Vietnam Culture): Nha xuất bản thông tin.
- Doan, D. H. (2005). Moral education or political education in the Vietnamese educational system? *Journal of Moral Education*, 34(4), 451-463.
- General Statistics Office of Vietnam. (2010). *Vietnam Population by sex, urban/ rural in 2008* (Publication. Retrieved July 25, 2010: <http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=387&idmid=3&ItemID=8636>
- Nguyen, H. P. (1998). *Van hoa chinh tri Viet Nam: Truyen thong va hien dai* (Vietnamese culture and politics: Traditional and Modern). Hanoi: Nha xuất bản van hoa thông tin (Culture and Information Publisher).
- Nguyen, T. T. (2006). *Bien doi van hoa do thi Viet Nam hien nay* (Today urban culture changes in Vietnam). Hanoi: Nha xuất bản van hoa thông tin & Văn Hóa
- Pham, H. L. (2000). *Thuc trang va giai phap nham tang cuong quan ly nha nuoc, ho tro sinh vien trong sinh hoạt, cu tru tren dia ban Quan Thanh Xuan va Cau Giay* (Reality and measures to improve state management and support to students in their lives at Thanh Xuan and Cau Giay Wards). Unpublished Research. People's Committees at Thanh Xuan and Cau Giay Wards, Hanoi City
- Phan, D. D. (1992). *Lang Viet Nam: Mot so van de kinh te xa hoi* (Vietnamese villages: Some economic and social issues). Ca Mau: Nha xuất bản khoa học xã hội.
- Thayer, C. A. (2009). Vietnam and the challenge of political civil society. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 31(1), 1-27.
- The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, The World Bank, & The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. (2005). *Vietnam Environment Monitor 2005*. Hanoi: The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, The World Bank, and The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
- Tran, N. T. (1999). *Co so van hoa Viet Nam* (Foundation of Vietnamese Culture). Ho Chi Minh: Nha xuất bản giáo dục.







## About the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics

The UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) helps governments, local authorities and decision-makers in business and industry to develop and implement policies and practices focusing on sustainable development.

The Division works to promote:

- > sustainable consumption and production,
- > the efficient use of renewable energy,
- > adequate management of chemicals,
- > the integration of environmental costs in development policies.

### **The Office of the Director, located in Paris, coordinates activities through:**

- > **The International Environmental Technology Centre** - IETC (Osaka, Shiga), which implements integrated waste, water and disaster management programmes, focusing in particular on Asia.
- > **Sustainable Consumption and Production** (Paris), which promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns as a contribution to human development through global markets.
- > **Chemicals** (Geneva), which catalyzes global actions to bring about the sound management of chemicals and the improvement of chemical safety worldwide.
- > **Energy** (Paris and Nairobi), which fosters energy and transport policies for sustainable development and encourages investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- > **OzonAction** (Paris), which supports the phase-out of ozone depleting substances in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to ensure implementation of the Montreal Protocol.
- > **Economics and Trade** (Geneva), which helps countries to integrate environmental considerations into economic and trade policies, and works with the finance sector to incorporate sustainable development policies.

*UNEP DTIE activities focus on raising awareness, improving the transfer of knowledge and information, fostering technological cooperation and partnerships, and implementing international conventions and agreements.*

For more information,  
see **[www.unep.fr](http://www.unep.fr)**

***This publication provides recommendations to develop efficient sustainable lifestyles policies and initiatives based on the Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL). It is aimed at policy-makers and all relevant stakeholders on how best to help support the shift to sustainable lifestyles, for instance through effective communication and awareness-raising campaigns.***

***The survey, which involved 8000 young urban adults from 20 different countries, points to three key dimensions of empowerment and creativity: new visions of progress, behavioral alternatives, as well as trust and participation. The report highlights the need for working together to better comprehend, educate and empower young adults globally, to enable them to create their own positive visions of sustainable lifestyles, and therefore become actors of change.***

***The GSSL was jointly developed by UNEP and the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, which was led by Sweden from 2005-2009, in the framework of the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).***

**www.unep.org**

United Nations Environment Programme  
P.O. Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel.: ++254 (0) 20 762 1234  
Fax: ++254 (0) 20 762 3927  
Email: [unepub@unep.org](mailto:unepub@unep.org)



For more information, contact:

**UNEP DTIE  
Sustainable Consumption  
and Production Branch**

15 Rue de Milan  
75441 Paris CEDEX 09  
France

Tel: +33 1 4437 1450  
Fax: +33 1 4437 1474  
E-mail: [unep.tie@unep.org](mailto:unep.tie@unep.org)  
[www.unep.fr](http://www.unep.fr)