

**Sustainable Consumption: Key Issues by Lucie Middlemiss.
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Sustainable consumption is among the most rapidly growing fields of interest for social scientists. It is an important field as it has gained momentum at a time when the global community is focusing on issues of climate change and sustainability. The past few years have seen a multi-disciplinary interest in the field; hence this well structured book provides a clear and interesting coverage to the field of sustainable consumption. In this book, Middlemiss discusses the contribution of the social science disciplines in the field of consumption by presenting their main arguments and perspectives in a relatively simple form for readers to understand. The book is divided into fourteen main chapters, and subdivided into three parts.

The first part of the book (chapters 1-3), provides a general introduction of the concept of sustainable consumption, by covering the key concepts. These include among others: pro-environmental behaviour (Psychology), pro-environmental practice (Sociology), ethical consumption (Business Studies and Cultural Studies), and environmental citizenship (Political Science). The author outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the term “sustainable consumption” and then goes on to cover some of the core ideas that have attracted various approaches to the field. The author, for example, discusses about the importance of “sustainable consumption” as a field to bring together a wide range of social science disciplines. Middlemiss argues that by bringing these disciplines together, the field creates a platform to look at possible solutions to environmental and social problems. This emanates from the fact that some disciplines may, in some cases, not understand the problem of unsustainable consumption in the same way that other disciplines do. In this first part of the book, the author also outlines the problem of sustainable consumption from an environmental perspective by briefly profiling the state of the environment, who impacts on the environment and how much; and then outlines the main ways in which environmental impact has been measured.

This includes a detailed comparison highlighting the 'distribution' of consumption and 'distribution' of environmental harm across nations and within nations. Various measurements are outlined and they focus on measuring specific forms of consumption, measuring overall impact as well as measuring overall resources used. Further discussion in this section centres on issues about social difference such as gender, class, age, ethnic origin, disability status and how a specific social category affects how individuals consume. The author succeeds exploring various concepts including justice, responsibility, identity, distinction and stigma and showing how such concepts could help us in theorising our understanding about social difference and sustainable consumption. The author argues that the importance of understanding social difference, is manifested through its capability to influence individuals' ability to engage with the idea of sustainable consumption.

Part two of the book covers chapters 4-9 with topics ranging from people's education, selfishness, values, ecological citizenship and political consumerism, practice approach and meaningfulness of consumption. In this section, Middlemiss raises interesting key points on the potential and limits of education as a solution to sustainable consumption problems. The author points out that sustainable consumption problems cannot be solved by education alone, hence any calls for consumers to be educated usually aim to serve as a cover up to political motivations. The arguments here are drawn from political science and science and technology, therefore giving a reader a clear understanding of the role of information. On the other hand, the author applies rational choice model from economics and also uses sociological perspective to critically discuss the idea that selfishness is a part of human nature. On selfishness, the author concludes that people must feel personally threatened by environmental problems as that would drive them towards taking action. What makes this book interesting is how the author has been able to systematically engage with different disciplines. In this section, for example, psychology and its sub-discipline of social psychology are applied by the author to show how people's pro-environmental values affect the way they behave. That is, those with pro-environmental values are likely to consume more sustainably than those whose values are against environmental sustainability. The author therefore takes the liberty to define in detail the concepts of 'attitudes' and 'values' by providing analysis on how people's thoughts and feelings impact on the types of decisions they end up making. Likewise, borrowing

concepts from political science, the book covers issues on what the author terms as the 'micro-politics' of sustainable consumption by looking at explanations of shopping, consumption and consumerism. It discusses ecological citizenship and political consumerism by providing examples of consumer activism around the world. The author, for instance, cites examples from the US, Malaysia and Brazil. At the same time, applying a 'practice approach' the author uses this section of the book to discuss how society might be changed to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of some forms of consumption. The section ends with some thoughtful discussion using both empirical and theoretical insights to understand the meaningfulness of consumption. This allows us to apply such insights in understanding how the idea that "consumption is meaningful" could impact on what we know and can do about sustainable consumption.

In the final and third part of the book, Middlemiss discusses about the visions of future in sustainable consumption. The section covers chapters 10-14; in which topics such as production-consumption relationships, collective action on consumption, sustainable consumption, and emerging systemic solutions to sustainable consumption are insightfully highlighted by the author. The two ways connection between consumption and production is superbly analysed in this section. It reiterates the need to understand the existing connections between consumption and production as that would lead us into identifying sustainability problems and solutions in a more systemic way. This part of the book also explores and outlines different forms of collective action at the community and household levels by giving a strong critique to show how careful we must be about making assumptions. Interestingly, in this section, the author examines the widespread assumption that sustainable consumption is a route to happiness. The section urges us to remain critical to the idea that sustainable consumption brings happiness. In chapter 13, before the conclusion chapter, Middlemiss highlights some emerging systemic solutions to sustainable consumption by outlining what a systemic approach might entail from a macro-social and economic perspective. The chapter profiles three key bodies of work in the field of sustainable consumption: work on degrowth, new economics, and transitions which all relate to systemic change. This chapter engages in detail the various approaches to systemic thinking that are linked with sustainable consumption topics.

The book is of considerable importance in social sciences and especially for researchers interested in environmental issues. It delivers a well thoughtful account and perspective on sustainable consumption and it should certainly be read, not only by scholars and students, but also practitioners.