

From food consumer to “food citizen”?

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wastebustersfinland.blogspot.fi



Introducing Wastebusters Finland

- A fairly young research group – formed in 2016
- Focused on waste and the circular economy
- Consists of researchers in the fields of marketing, consumer research, business management and sociology
- Currently funded by EU Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ programs, Finnish foundations and Tampere University



Background

- This presentation is based on two research articles published by the Wastebusters research group:
 - Närvänen, E., Mattila, M. & Mesiranta, N. (2019). Consumer-citizens as leaders of change: Case food waste. In Kangas, A., Kujala J., Heikkinen, A., Lönnqvist, A., Laihonen, H., & Bethwaite, J. (eds.) *Leading change in a complex world: Transdisciplinary perspectives*. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 263–280. <https://blogs.uta.fi/leadershipforchange/lfc-book/leading-change-in-a-complex-world/>
 - Närvänen, E., Mesiranta, N., & Mattila, M. (2018). Roles of consumer-citizens in food waste reduction. *Kulutustutkimus.Nyt*, 12:1–2, 20–32. http://www.kulutustutkimus.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KTN_vol12_Narvanen-Mesiranta-and-Mattila.pdf



Edited book published in 2020. Open access chapters available at: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-20561-4>

Consumers or citizens?

- From opposites to complementary roles (e.g. Gabriel & Lang, 2015)
- Consumer:
 - **Pleasure-seeking, self-interested, utility-maximising**
- Citizen:
 - **Morality, altruism**
- In everyday life, these roles are not always in conflict – e.g. sustainable consumption lifestyle



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Three inspirational stories

For the purposes of illustrating the roles of consumer-citizens in food waste reduction, we created three fictional narratives based on our research data and findings.

Meet **Greg**, **Amy** and **Robin**!



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Greg, 55, high-school
teacher, widower



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The decision-maker role

Underlying assumptions	Is primarily satisfying his or her own needs, wants to hold on to a consumer's right to choose
Scale of change	Individual behaviour
Attitude towards change	Makes (small) changes in consumption decisions which may be sustainable –e.g. grocery store purchases, mobile applications
How are consumers activated?	Receiving factual information from governmental bodies, other institutions and experts



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Amy, 38, accounting
manager, mother of three

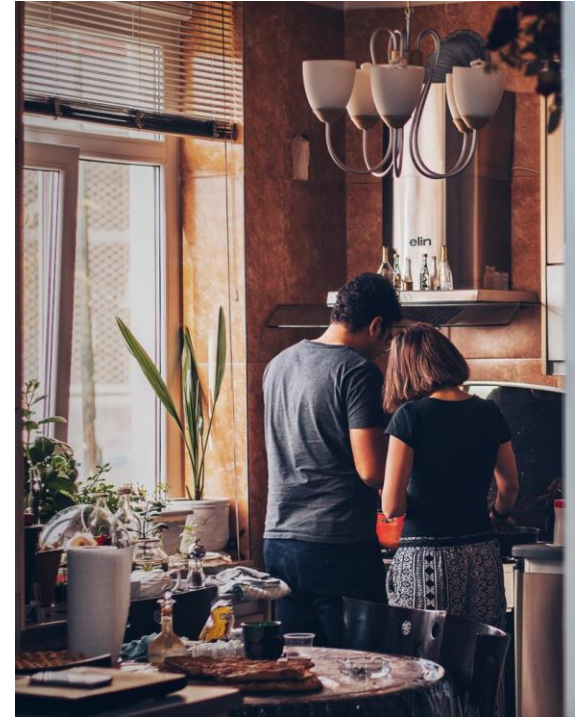


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The communal role

Underlying assumptions	Performs different practices and routines embedded in social and cultural contexts –e.g. in family life
Scale of change	Communities and groups
Attitude towards change	Willing and capable to critically evaluate and change daily food consumption-related routines
How are consumers activated?	Encouraged to use their own sensory and bodily knowledge, receiving tips and tools to change their practices as well as to engage others



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Robin, 32, start-up entrepreneur, married



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The active change agent role



Underlying assumptions	Is concerned about current (capitalist, exploitative) consumer society & the (future) condition of the Earth
Scale of change	System level
Stance towards change	Engages in actively changing food consumption practices of other consumers or the system as a whole
How are consumers activated?	Leveraging upon information and experience to change others (e.g. “From waste to delicacy” campaign of Finnish food bloggers, food waste activism, freeganism)

Implications for policy-makers

- Be inspired by consumers' stories!
- Move away from top-down, informational policies and expert-led campaigns targeted at consumers
- Move toward participatory, grassroots and bottom-up ways of engaging consumer-citizens
- Do not leave the responsibility for reducing food waste on any one actor - engage all stakeholders



THANK YOU!

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Check out our latest publication:

Närvänen, E., Mattila, M. & Mesiranta, N. (2020). Institutional work in food waste reduction: Start-ups' role in moving towards a circular economy. *Industrial Marketing Management*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.08.009>

Lehtokunnas, T., Mattila, M., Närvänen, E. & Mesiranta, N. (2020). Towards circular economy in food consumption: Food waste reduction practices as ethical work. *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1469540520926252>