

---

## **The moral responsibility of consumers as citizens**

---

Ulf Schrader

Institut für Marketing und Management,  
Leibniz Universität Hannover,  
Königsworther Platz 1, 30167 Hannover, Germany  
Fax: ++49/511/762-5630  
E-mail: us@marketing.uni-hannover.de

**Abstract:** The paper addresses the extent of, and preconditions for, consumers' moral responsibility for sustainable consumption. Starting from the concept of consumer citizenship it is argued that full citizenship includes both rights and duties. The established set of Kennedy's consumer rights is used as a basis for deriving corresponding consumer duties, which foster sustainable development. It will be shown that an extension of the traditional rights is a precondition for the execution of these duties: to be informed, to choose consciously and to make oneself heard. The paper ends with the conclusion that the extent of consumers' responsibility depends on the extent of consumers' rights. Thus, proponents of a higher degree of consumers' responsibility are called to work for the necessary provision of consumer rights.

**Keywords:** consumer citizenship; rights and duties; sustainable development; corporate social responsibility; CSR; exit and voice.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Schrader, U. (2007) 'The moral responsibility of consumers as citizens', *Int. J. Innovation and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.79–96.

**Biographical notes:** Ulf Schrader is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the Institute of Marketing and Management at the Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany. He holds Degrees in Economics and Management and in Political Science. He did his PhD in Marketing and his post doctorate (Habilitation) in Business Administration. His main research and teaching interests are sustainable consumption, corporate social responsibility, consumer policy, and services marketing. In these fields he has led a number of national and international research projects and published five books and numerous papers.

---

### **1 Relevance of the topic and course of the paper**

Consumers play an increasingly significant role in the discussion about sustainable development. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, consumption has a huge direct impact on the ecological and social living conditions of people today and in the future (e.g., The Worldwatch Institute, 2004); only a reduction in resource-use of private households in the developed world would allow consumers in developing regions to enhance their living conditions sustainably (United Nations, 2006). Secondly – and maybe more importantly – consumers' role as potential influencers of companies and corporate behaviour is gaining importance. Since globally-operating corporations can

only partially be controlled by nation states or the rudimentary system of global governance (e.g., Matten and Crane, 2005; Scherer and Schmid, 2000), a growing number of academics and politicians point to the consumer as a possible step-in to increase the morality of the market. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck uses the example of the Shell boycott in 1995 to stress his idea of consumption being a crucial arena for responsible world citizenship. According to him,

“The citizen discovers the buying act as a direct ballot sheet which can be always and everywhere applied politically. [...] This resembles – exemplarily – Kant’s utopia of a global citizen’s society [...]” (Beck, 1997, p.124; own translation)

Klaus Töpfer, the former director of UNEP, is equally optimistic and emphasises the information aspect when he states that “consumers are increasingly interested in the world that lies behind the product they buy. [...] This increasing awareness about environmental and social issues is a sign of hope” (Töpfer, 1999; cf. de Leeuw, 2005, p.7). A similar perspective is also apparent in the viewpoint of the current UNEP director, Achim Steiner, who states that “With our power as consumers [...] we do have unlimited unused opportunities [to act against climate change]” (Steiner cf. Grefe, 2007, p.6, own translation). Thus, there is a big hope that morally responsible consumers will actively foster sustainable development (Reisch, 2004).

In this context, the present paper addresses two main questions:

- What exactly is expected from a morally responsible consumer?
- What are the preconditions for consumers being able to meet these expectations?

The proposed answers are highly interconnected, since they both have to do with consumers’ rights and duties.

In Section 2, I will specify the fundamental expectations that one could reasonably have of a responsible consumer. I start by introducing consumer citizenship as an up-and-coming concept for morally responsible consumer behaviour that contributes to sustainable development. By portraying foundations of citizenship theory I will then show that the prevailing understanding of consumer citizenship puts a lopsided focus on duties, neglecting rights. Consumer rights traditionally represent the main targets of consumer policy. Thus, I will present John F. Kennedy’s established set of consumer rights as the starting point for a more complete picture of consumer citizenship. Furthermore, this set of rights can be used to systematically derive a corresponding set of consumer citizens’ duties. These duties include the responsibilities from the original concept of consumer citizenship, but go beyond them.

The preconditions for executing these duties, and thus the second main question, are dealt with in Section 3. Generally, responsibility arises from the freedom to act (e.g., Kant, 1986 [1785]), meaning that only people who can choose between different alternatives can be held responsible for their behaviour. Thus, only if supplied with an adequate behavioural framework are consumers able to fulfil duties which support sustainability. I will therefore indicate how traditional consumer rights should be extended to create a structure which allows morally responsible consumer citizenship. The paper closes with conclusions and a discussion of open questions.

## **2 Rights and duties of consumer citizens**

### *2.1 Consumer citizenship: focus on duties*

When looking for a concept that frames the morally responsible consumer in the context of sustainable development, consumer citizenship is most promising. Consumer citizenship is a term that has been gaining ground since the late 1990s in the discussion on sustainable consumption (McGregor, 2002). It gained further relevance with the establishment of The Consumer Citizenship Network (CCN) in 2003. The CCN is an EU-funded thematic network of researchers and civil-society organisations from 30 European countries, which also includes UNESCO, UNEP and Consumers International. It can be characterised as a consumer policy actor since its main focus is on fostering consumer education, which is (together with information, legal protection and representation) one of the core instruments of consumer policy.

The network's definition of a consumer citizen explicitly refers to consumers' responsibility and sustainable development:

“A consumer citizen is an individual who makes choices based on ethical, social, economic and ecological considerations. The consumer citizen actively contributes to the maintenance of just and sustainable development by caring and acting responsibly on family, national and global levels.” (CCN, 2005, p.7)

According to this definition, consumer citizenship is about fulfilling duties. Two duties, in particular, can be identified:

- to consider “ethical, social, economic and ecological”<sup>1</sup> issues
- to make an active choice on the basis of these considerations.

By choosing consciously, the consumer citizen should contribute to local and global sustainable development. Thus, consumer citizenship is based on the broad understanding of sustainable development, which includes (at least) the dimensions ecology, society, and economy and which not only focuses on the intergenerational perspective but also includes the task of intragenerational justice (WCED, 1987).

The focus on duties in the CCN definition of consumer citizenship is doubly remarkable. It neglects the importance of rights in the discourse on both citizenship and consumerism.<sup>2</sup> To illustrate this, I will first present the foundations of citizenship theory and then consumer rights as the traditional target of consumer policy. Both will help to develop a more complete picture of consumer citizenship.

### *2.2 Citizenship: focus on rights and duties*

Citizenship generally describes the membership of individuals in political communities. While the concept of citizenship, at its origins in ancient Athens, was limited to older affluent male inhabitants of a city-state it has become more and more inclusive since then (Oliver and Heater, 1994). As shown, the new concept of consumer citizenship aims at supporting sustainable development, which means inter- and intra-generational justice. Thus, the relevant community in this case is humanity as a whole. Accordingly, especially with regards to sustainability, different arguments for world citizenship can be found (e.g., Beck, 2004; Kriegman, 2006). Different normative and descriptive problems of such a generalised concept are discussed (e.g., Beiner, 1995; Dahrendorf, 1994;

Habermas, 1994); however for this paper it is important to note that the concept of citizenship does not *per se* exclude any consumer.

Independent of the question of inclusiveness, two main streams of theoretical reasoning can be distinguished within the discussion on citizenship, which has been ongoing for more than 2000 years: liberalism and republicanism (e.g., Heater, 1999; Oldfield, 1990; Oliver and Heater, 1994). Both deal with rights and duties, but liberalism focuses on the former while republicanism is much more concerned with the latter.

The abovementioned consumer citizen definition, proposed by the CCN, implicitly follows the *republican understanding of citizenship theory*. This stream of thinking goes back to Aristotle (384–322 BC) and his ‘The Politics’; which is a mixture of Aristotle’s normative ideal of a good political community and a description of the reality in the city-state (*polis*) of Athens 462–322 BC, where free citizens mutually ruled each other (Arblaster, 1994). Consequently, for Aristotle, good citizenship in general means “knowing both how to rule and how to obey” (Aristotle, 1988 [c. 330 BC], p.56 = 1277a). Citizens have the responsibility to take part in the creation and execution of rules that are intended to promote the public weal. For good citizens, those duties are not externally imposed rules, but intrinsic obligations. Since “man is by nature a political animal” (Aristotle, 1988 [c. 330 BC], p.3 = 1253a), for him it is a “principle of liberty ... to rule and be ruled in turn” (Aristotle, 1988 [c. 330 BC], p.144 = 1317b). This idea was taken over by Rousseau (1712–1778) another famous republican thinker who also saw no contradiction between duties and liberty: “When a man renounces his liberty he renounces his essential manhood, his rights, and even his duty as a human being” (Rousseau, 1970 [1762], p.248). The contemporary version of republican citizenship theory is formulated by various communitarian thinkers (e.g., MacIntyre, 1981; Walzer, 1983; Etzioni, 1993; Putnam, 2000), who stress that the promotion of the public weal is not only a task of the government but also of individuals and their communities.

What is common to all republican thinkers is that they depict citizenship as a political *activity* (Oldfield, 1990). The focus is on duties that must be executed actively. Thus, in this interpretation, at least some degree of intentional good citizenship behaviour is necessary to become a full member of a polity (Bauböck, 1999).

The competing *liberal tradition of citizenship theory* can be traced back to the Roman Republic, where in the 1st century AD the first comprehensive system of legal rights was set up (Stokes, 1999). Corresponding to this social innovation, the Romans defined a citizen primarily as a legal subject (*homo legalis*), as opposed to the Greeks’ definition as a political being (*zoon politikon*) (Delanty, 2000; Pocock, 1992). The direct origins for today’s liberal citizenship concepts are the British liberal thinkers of the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and John Locke (1632–1704). Hobbes in his ‘On the Citizen’ (1642) and ‘Leviathan’ (1651) as well as Locke in his ‘Second Treatise of Government’ (1689) argue that it is justifiable to restrict people’s freedom by establishing a government, since it is the only way to guarantee people’s civil rights and the freedom related to it. According to Hobbes (1965 [1651], p.64), only a strong government is able to prevent the war “of every man against every man” and ensure physical safety and individual property. Consequently, Locke (1970 [1689]) describes the guarantee of the triad of individual property, life and freedom as the main purpose of governments. Marshall (1994 [1949]), the last century’s most prominent author on liberal citizenship, has shown that, at least in England, the implementation of these *civil rights* in the 18th century was complemented by *political rights* (especially the active and passive right to vote) in the 19th century and *social rights* (especially protection against poverty,

unemployment and consequences of illness) in the 20th century. Today, especially neo-liberal thinkers question whether the existing extent of socio-economic rights really enhances individual freedom, or whether the welfare-state has rather developed into a 'nanny-state' that is responsible for the heteronomy and dependency of many people (e.g., Heater, 1999).

Thus, the extent to which a polity should provide its citizens with rights is controversial, but common to all liberal thinkers, is the focus on rights being provided as a consequence of being a citizen. Thus, citizenship is not regarded as an activity but as a *status* (Oldfield, 1990). This status is independent of actual behaviour. It does not require active 'good' citizenship (Bauböck, 1999).

These foundations of citizenship theory provide an explanation for the disregard of consumer rights in the definition of consumer citizenship. If rights are related to the status of consumers and not to their activity, there is no obvious need to stress rights, when talking about sustainable consumer *behaviour*. Like the communitarians, proponents of this idea follow the reasoning that for the time being rights can be – more or less – taken for granted, since they have provided the dominant citizenship (and consumption) perspective in the Western World for more than 200 years (Heater, 1999) and that it is necessary to balance this development by putting emphasis on duties (Reisch, 2004). However, contemporary citizenship theory stresses the interdependencies between rights and duties: on the one hand liberal rights provide the preconditions for good republican citizenship behaviour and on the other hand good citizenship behaviour is expressed in the active and conscious execution of e.g., political rights (e.g., Stokes, 2002). The interrelatedness of the two main streams of citizenship thinking becomes apparent in the merging of the terms, into 'republican liberalism' or 'liberal republicanism' (e.g., Buttle, 1997; Kenny, 2003). Thus, to get a more complete picture of consumers as citizens, both activity and status have to be taken into account. Therefore, it is not enough to talk about consumers' duties, but it is also necessary to consider consumers' rights – which have also been the traditional focus of institutionalised consumer policy (Hilton, 2005).

### *2.3 Traditional consumer policy: focus on rights*

The paradigm behind the traditional consumer policy's focus on rights is consumer sovereignty. It has been the basic idea of market economists since Adam Smith that the economy should guarantee a supply of goods and services which fulfils the needs of consumers (e.g. Smith, 1976 [1776], p.660).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the individual needs of consumers should guide the activities of corporations.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the targets of consumer policy have been to guarantee the operability of markets and to help consumers to push through their interests in economic relationships with companies (e.g., Hansen and Schrader, 1997).

The most prominent set of consumer rights, which have been considered to bring about consumer sovereignty, was set up neither by non-governmental consumer policy activists nor by academics, but by the former American president John F. Kennedy. His endeavour was a reaction to the growing number and complexity of products (goods and services), which occurs as a consequence of technological and economic development. This impedes consumers' efforts to buy and use products which fulfil their needs. Therefore, in a "Special Message to the Congress on Protecting the Consumer Interest" on March 15, 1962, Kennedy proposed four basic rights (Kennedy, 1962):

*The right to safety* – to be protected against the marketing of goods which are hazardous to health or life.

*The right to be informed* – to be protected against fraudulent, deceitful, or grossly misleading information, advertising, labelling, or other practices, and to be given the facts he needs to make an informed choice.

*The right to choose* – to be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of products and services at competitive prices [ ... ].

*The right to be heard* – to be assured that consumer interests will receive full and sympathetic consideration in the formulation of Government policy, and fair and expeditious treatment in its administrative tribunals.”

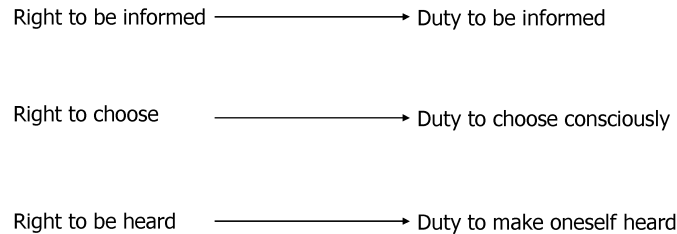
This list of rights has become well-established, and since 1983 has been celebrated annually on March 15th, the World Consumer Rights Day. Kennedy’s rights provide the basis e.g., for the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (United Nations, 1999) and many other (national and international, governmental and non-governmental) activities in the field of consumer policy (Hilton, 2005). Nevertheless, these rights have to be understood as goals, not as legal rights a consumer can pursue in court. Different consumer rights have been added, especially with regards to social and ecological aspects, but the original four still form the core.

In the following I will use these rights to derive a corresponding set of duties which would support sustainable consumption.

#### 2.4 *Deriving consumer citizen’s duties from consumer rights*

As shown by citizenship theory, the acceptance of citizenship duties requires active behaviour, while rights are unconditionally connected to the status of being a citizen. However, the implementation of rights sometimes also relies on action. In the case of the abovementioned consumer rights, the right to safety does not require consumer activity since it is formulated as a negative right which entitles the consumer to protection against specific corporate behaviour. The same is partially true for the right to be informed when it comes to protection “against fraudulent, deceitful, or grossly misleading information”. However, the right to be informed is, simultaneously, a positive right which promises the provision of all needed information; making use of it requires the gathering and processing of information, and thus activity from consumers. This also applies to the other two rights: the right to choose is realised by actively choosing between alternatives, and the use of the right to be heard requires consumers to raise their voice.

In the following I will show that an active implementation of consumers’ rights can cover the moral responsibility of consumer citizens, as defined by the CCN (see Section 2.1). In a republican sense the conscious execution of consumers’ rights to support sustainable development is equivalent with the fulfilment of consumers’ duties, since this supports the public good – the core target of republican citizenship behaviour. Thus, the different duties can be derived directly from those established consumer rights which require activity (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Deriving consumer citizen's duties from consumer rights

The right to be informed leads to the duty to be informed about relevant sustainability issues. This corresponds to the CCN's definition of the consumer citizen which refers to the consideration of "ethical, social, economic and ecological" issues (CCN, 2005, p.7). The second duty included in that definition, i.e., making use of this information when choosing consciously among consumption alternatives, also corresponds to a consumer right, namely to the right to choose. The guideline for a consumer citizen's choice amongst the consumption alternatives could be framed as follows: do not contribute as a consumer to developments you oppose as a citizen who is interested in sustainable development, but, in contrast, support the sustainable development you would like to happen as a citizen with your consumption activities (Reisch, 2004).<sup>5</sup> If first empirical studies, which indicate that general principles of sustainable development (careful use of resources, justice between the generations, fairness between North and South) enjoy high acceptance (Kuckartz and Rheingans-Heintze, 2005), could be generalised, an implementation of this guideline would cover high percentages of citizens. The conscious consumer choice can happen individually but can also be co-ordinated on a collective level in the form of boycotts or its flip side: the active rewarding of corporations in a boycott (Stolle et al., 2005). It is important to note that consumers' choices are not restricted to buying decisions between different product alternatives. Choice options exist in all phases of the process of consumption (buying, using and disposing) and also include the zero-option; the decision to not fulfil a specific need, or to do so without using the market-supply.

In addition to the CCN's definition of consumer citizenship, the responsibilities of being informed and choosing consciously are complemented here by the duty to make oneself heard – as a mirror image of the right to be heard. In this context the duty is to raise one's voice when consumption-related impacts on sustainability are perceived. In contrast to Kennedy's limited focus, to be effective, consumers' voice should not only address governmental institutions but also important sub-political actors (Beck, 1986) like corporations, NGOs, the media and also other consumers. Thus, the duty to make oneself heard includes, for example, asking for sustainable product alternatives in shops where they are not offered, requesting consumer organisations to offer more information on sustainability issues, or talking with friends and relatives about sustainable shopping.

The duties to choose consciously and to make oneself heard correspond to Hirschman's (1970) well known differentiation of consumers', citizens' and employees' sanction power into 'exit' and 'voice'.<sup>6</sup> Together with numerous empirical analyses in the aftermath of his publication (see e.g., the compilation in Hirschman, 1974) he has shown that switching suppliers and voicing complaints as reactions to dissatisfaction can bring about desired changes. According to Hirschman (1976), the voice option is often the superior means of reaction, since it carries more information, so changes can occur faster

and more precisely in the direction desired by the unsatisfied. Additionally, voice in contrast to exit offers the opportunity to remain loyal to the organisation which has caused the (temporary) discontent. However, exit and voice are not mutually exclusive (e.g., Graham and Keeley, 1992) and thus a combination of both – as we find, e.g., in a typical boycott – is often the most powerful expression of discontent, especially if it is conducted as a collective campaign.

Hirschman explicitly states that the voice option is not only to be used to increase individual benefits, but also to support the public good. According to his optimistic conception of humanity,

“[ ... ] voice becomes an enjoyable, exhilarating experience when it is also action in the public interest, sometimes just because it is felt as a release from the unremitting pursuit of purely self-regarding activity.” (Hirschman 1976, p.387)

A consumer using voice to support sustainability would be taking such an action in the public interest.

It should be emphasised that considering sustainability issues in exit and voice is not restricted to phenomena which cause dissatisfaction. Thus, it is not necessarily about stopping problematic developments, but can also be about actively supporting positive phenomena. In practice, these aspects are sometimes barely distinguishable. Consumers who try to avoid resource-intensive industrialised food production and switch to local organic supply are about to do both by punishing one supplier and rewarding the other.

The omission of a special safety related duty does not mean that safety issues are irrelevant for sustainable consumption. They have to be considered within the other duties and thus taken into account when acquiring relevant information, choosing between consumption alternatives and making oneself heard on sustainability issues.

However, in many cases the obstacles for consumers to be willing and able to execute the abovementioned duties are prohibitively high. To reduce the barriers, it is necessary to reinterpret and extend implementation of consumer rights.

### **3 The extension of rights as a precondition for executing consumer citizens' duties**

While the previous section focused on the duties which might be expected from a morally responsible consumer citizen, this section deals with the preconditions for the execution of such duties. The necessary freedom to act is constituted by the consumers' rights. Since traditional consumer policy has been focused on short-term individual needs, the typical interpretation of consumer rights has been limited to aspects necessary for consumers to pursue the satisfaction of these needs. If consumption is also understood as a political activity to support sustainability, a reinterpretation of consumer rights is needed. This applies to all rights which correspond to consumer duties. Governmental, non-governmental, and corporate actors and sometimes also consumers themselves need to create the basic conditions which allow citizens to execute the above mentioned consumer duties. Thus, in the following I will present general demands and selected practical examples for the extension of consumer rights.



### 3.1 *Extended right to be informed*

Conscious sustainable consumption is based on information about the social and ecological consequences of buying, using and disposing of products.

When it comes to buying, classical product related information is not enough. What has to be added is information about ‘The World Behind the Product’ (de Leeuw, 2005). If consumers are – according to the quotes in the introduction – willing to use their purchasing power like ballot sheets to punish or reward corporations, they need to know about the impact of corporate activity. The challenge is that, from a consumer’s perspective, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a ‘credence quality’, which – unlike most traditional buying criteria – can be assessed by neither inspection nor personal consumption experience (Darby and Karni, 1973; Nelson, 1970). Thus, the supply of credible and accessible information becomes crucial (OECD 2007; Schrader, 2006). While some facts are systematically hard to collect and to evaluate, other relevant information is at hand in corporations. The question is about how to overcome the existing information asymmetry. Corporations themselves play an important role here. However, business communication on CSR has for a long time focussed on institutional stakeholders like financial investors, critical NGOs, academia or the media (e.g., Kolk, 2004; Marshall and Brown, 2003). Only recently have some bigger companies started to address the ordinary citizen, also, in their role as consumer, through, for example, advertising campaigns on their social responsibility. However, this information generally lacks completeness, comparability, balance, and sometimes – since consumers know about corporate interests – trustworthiness (Morsing and Schultz, 2006; Schuler and Cording, 2006). Thus, corporate disclosure usually needs the involvement of independent actors to transform the available information into credible and action-relevant consumer information.

Since they are generally considered as independent advocates of consumer interests, and provided they have the necessary communication skills, consumer organisations can take over the role of the catalysing third party between corporations and consumers (e.g., Thøgersen, 2005). In line with these considerations, product testing organisations in different European countries have started to complement their product tests with CSR tests. In Germany, for example, the *Stiftung Warentest* published its first CSR test (on producers of functional jackets) in its consumer magazine (circulation: about 600,000 copies) in 2004 and has since conducted similar tests for different branches. They all include at least four dimensions of analysis: employees, environment, consumers and society, and suppliers. According to these dimensions, the affected companies are compared on the basis of a long company questionnaire, document analysis and investigation by *Stiftung Warentest*. A complex pilot evaluation study indicates that about a quarter of CSR test readers effectively consider these test results in their buying decisions (Schoenheit, 2006). Nevertheless, the publication of consumer oriented comparative CSR tests is still an exception to the rule.

A more condensed version of CSR information is provided by labelling schemes. Traditionally, these have been focussed on ecological issues (e.g., Rubik and Frankl, 2005), but the significance of social labels, e.g., on fair trade or child labour, is also growing (e.g., Brinkmann, 2004; Hilton, 2005; Steinrücken and Jaenichen, 2007; Stolle et al., 2005). If well-known and widely accepted, these labelling schemes reduce the information costs of consumers, who get the relevant facts in a concentrated form (Karstens and Belz, 2006) and thus make it easier for consumers to be informed.

Eco-labels and additional product information can also be used to minimise the negative ecological effects of consumption during the use period. Products like cars or washing machines cause about 80% of their environmental burden during their use phase rather than in their production. The resource consumption and the polluting emissions of consumer products, however, depend not only on consumer behaviour but also on the eco-efficiency of a product (e.g., Mont and Bleischwitz, 2007). Information on these aspects is crucial for more sustainable consumption. Although adequate labelling schemes have been implemented on these issues in various different countries, the relevant information is still not easily available for every product (Rubik and Frankl, 2005).

In addition, in many countries, a number of (online and offline) publications provide so-called consumer tips about ecological consumption. They deal with behavioural aspects, such as how to save energy or how to manage domestic waste. Since it is not feasible to follow every possible advice, these publications need to differentiate between 'key points', 'big points' and 'peanuts' (Bilharz, 2007) to offer real guidance for consumer citizens.

To sum up, the availability of information relevant for sustainable consumption has increased in most developed countries. However, neither the quantity nor the quality of consumer information presently available indicates sufficient implementation of an extended right to be informed.

What is more, the existence of adequate information does not guarantee that all well-intentioned consumers really are informed. The handling of this information often requires skills and, thus, consumer education (e.g., Benn, 2004). Therefore, it is debatable whether an additional right to get consumer education needs to be added, as it is in the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (United Nations, 1999) or in the list of consumer rights of Consumers International (2007). In some cases, even that could be too limited and an additional right for qualified advice might become necessary (Schrader, 2006).

### *3.2 Extended right to choose*

Consumer citizens can only choose sustainable ways of consumption when they are available. Availability means that they do exist and that they are attractive offers for consumers 'at competitive prices', as Kennedy stated in his definition of the right to choose. From an ecological perspective, the most obvious option is to simply consume less – which is cost efficient. However, from a consumer's point of view this is often not attractive and is sometimes not possible. When it comes to buying more sustainable goods and services, the availability in developed countries varies between the different fields.

In the field of nutrition, organic food is – though still a niche – a fast-growing market (Halweil and Nierenberg, 2004; Willer and Minou, 2007). Prices have decreased since big conventional retail chains entered the market. When a broad interpretation of price is used, which goes beyond monetary elements and also includes non-financial consumer efforts, the situation has improved even more for consumers, since the broader distribution allows them to shop organic without changing traditional shopping habits. In addition, different studies show that organic food can support individual health and sometimes tastes better (e.g., Halweil and Nierenberg, 2004); thus combining a direct individual benefit with the ecological advantage of the product. For the time being, the

(still) higher price level and a limited product portfolio limits consumers' right to choose. Nevertheless, consumers usually do have the chance to buy at least some kind of attractive sustainable products in the field of nutrition.

Similar developments can be observed with regards to household energy consumption. For example, in different countries, so-called 'green power', which is produced from renewable sources only, is available to private consumers (Wüstenhagen and Bilharz, 2006). Political activity has meant that the price for a 'green' kilowatt hour is sometimes hardly higher than for the traditional alternative (Bechberger and Reiche, 2006). Consequently, e.g., in Germany, after a long period of stagnation, the willingness to switch from a traditional energy contract to green electricity has risen considerably.

When it comes to mobility, the situation is worse. People looking at cars can hardly find offers which deserve the label 'sustainable'. If the Honda Civic Hybrid and the Toyota Prius, which still need about five litres of fuel per 100 km, are considered to be the most environmental friendly mass-production vehicles, the consumer citizen's right to choose is limited and needs to be extended by the introduction of more sustainable products. In the case of tourism, sustainable alternatives do exist. However, the low price of air travel often makes highly polluting long-distance trips more attractive. Here – as in other fields of consumption – policy measures such as green tax reform would make it easier for consumers to choose sustainable alternatives, and would thus influence the right to choose in the targeted way (e.g., Renner, 2004).

A reform which increases taxes on resource-use and decreases taxes on human labour would also support so called sustainable services, which allow consumers to benefit from the use of a product without being obliged to buy one (e.g., Schrader, 1999; Halme et al., 2005). Instead of buying electric tools, a consumer could use rented machines or hire a skilled tradesman – if easily available at reasonable cost. Since, in these cases, the tools are usually highly durable and used intensively, they are on average more eco-efficient than individual product ownership. Additionally, since consumers pay for every use, these services often foster need reflection, and cause sufficiency effects. The principle has been applied to different product areas (such as car-sharing and laundrettes instead of owning cars and washing machines) and successfully implemented in the field of habitation, especially by bigger housing companies (Halme et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the commercial supply of attractive sustainable services is still limited. In some cases consumers themselves increase their right to choose sustainable services in the form of private self help. An institutionalised form of this are Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) which have transferred the idea of traditional common use and mutual help within big families to the community level (e.g., Peacock, 2006).

Sustainable services also affect the disposing phase of consumption, since in this case the service suppliers are responsible for the recycling or removal of used products (e.g., Halme et al., 2005). In other cases, the readiness and ability of consumers to act as responsible co-producers for the waste management industry depends on the available recycling infrastructure (e.g., Barr, 2004).

To sum up, the more the right to choose is implemented, the better the duty to choose consciously sustainable alternatives can be effected.

### *3.3 Extended right to be heard*

The right to be heard has to include the assurance that consumers' concern for sustainability issues is considered by relevant actors who are responsible for the supply of

information and consumption alternatives (i.e., for the rights described above). As mentioned with regard to duties, and in contrast to Kennedy's interpretation, not only governments and governmental organisations should be considered as relevant addressees of consumers' communication, but also, Corporations, NGOs and fellow consumers can play a crucial role in making sustainable consumption a real option.

Appropriate communication channels are needed if the duty to make oneself heard is to be carried out. Here, the internet provides usable means which reduce the communication costs for consumers (Rezabakhsh et al., 2006). Additionally, it increases the impact of consumer-to-consumer communication. While traditional word-of-mouth is restricted to communication situations of one-to-one or one-to-few (friends or relative) the use of the internet (e.g., blogs or opinion platforms) provides consumers with the chance to communicate with many others, with low restrictions on time and space (Stauss, 2000). This is one of the reasons why consumers' critique of irresponsible corporate behaviour is increasingly considered as a relevant threat, especially by big corporations with valuable brands (Stolle et al., 2005; Bennett, 2003). However, for many consumers the internet is still a confusing communication jungle. It will only extend consumer rights if complemented by sufficient media competence on the consumers' side.

Corporations also offer online forums and feedback functions. This complements traditional instruments, like consumer affairs departments (Hansen and Schoenheit, 1986). However, the right to be heard includes more than the provision of input opportunities. The incoming consumer statements need to be transformed into activities to show that the consumer's voice is really heard. Thus, the right to be heard often includes the right to be a partner in a dialogue. In this respect, different companies and institutions conduct stakeholder dialogues with consumers and other stakeholders (e.g., Pedersen, 2006). The dialogues do not have to be restricted to commenting on behaviour of the past, but they can also be used to create sustainable innovations for the future. Consumer integration into innovation processes is a new trend in innovation management (von Hippel, 2005). In the field of sustainable development, these concepts are also promising, though hardly used (Hoffmann, 2007). Thus, there is still huge unused potential to offer consumers an extended right to be heard. A further implementation, however, has to take into account consumers' restrictions with regard to time, interest and qualification.

#### **4 Conclusions and open questions**

To sum up, the paper proposes the following answers to the leading questions from the introductory section:

- the moral responsibility of consumers as citizens consists of fulfilling consumer duties – which correspond to the established set of consumer rights
- the precondition for consumer citizenship is the extension of traditional consumer rights.

Rights and duties are highly interconnected. The extension of consumer rights as described in the last section increases consumers' freedom to act and thus, as indicated at the start of this paper, their responsibility.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, exercising extended consumer

rights simultaneously means exercising consumer duties. Extended consumer rights are both a precondition and a call for morally responsible consumer citizenship.

However, this paper only delivers a general framework. A number of questions remain unanswered, notably around the extent to which the proposed duties remain open to individual interpretation and public discourse. Some examples are as follows:

- Does the duty to be informed ‘only’ require the consideration of the information at hand, or does it also include an active search for additional available information – which is practically unlimited in an information society?
- How to fulfil the duty to consciously choose sustainable consumption alternatives when goal conflicts exist – i.e., conflicts between sustainability and other needs or conflicts among different sustainability issues?
- In which situation is it your duty to make yourself heard with your sustainability concerns – since it cannot be to everybody, always and everywhere?

These open questions may well be unanswerable. Nevertheless, the recognition of duties is not arbitrary. This paper has shown that sustainable development requires consumers’ duties, and different actors to guarantee the corresponding rights. Thus, if politicians and NGO representatives stress the importance of morally responsible consumer behaviour, they are obliged also to work for the necessary extension of consumer rights. Only when these rights are provided can the related duties be fulfilled by consumer citizens.

Realistically, not all consumers will accept their responsibilities as citizens. However – as diffusion studies (e.g., Rogers, 1995) have shown – it takes not all, but rather a few innovative consumers, for industry to change markets and to start self-enforcing processes. These innovators need to be empowered by extended rights. As briefly mentioned in Section 3, consumers can partially extend their rights with respect to their freedom to act mutually (by providing information, goods and services and communication channels), but for big scale development they depend on structural changes. To bring about these changes, citizens are not only in demand as consumers, but also as voters, as employees and business owners, as teachers and researchers or in various other roles open to human beings in modern societies.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to the editors, an anonymous reviewer and Stephanos Anastasiadis for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

### **References**

- Arblaster, A. (1994) *Democracy*, 2nd ed., Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Aristotle (1988) *The Politics*, *Cambridge Texts in History of Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Barr, S. (2004) ‘What we buy, what we throw away and how we use our voice. Sustainable household waste management in the UK’, *Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp.32–44.
- Bauböck, R. (1999) *Recombinant Citizenship*, Political Science Series No. 67, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna.

- Bechberger, M. and Reiche, D. (2006) *Good Environmental Governance for Renewable Energies: The Example of Germany – Lessons for China?*, WZB Discussion Paper No. P 2006-006, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin.
- Beck, U. (1986) *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Beck, U. (1997) *Was ist Globalisierung? Irrtümer des Globalismus – Antworten auf Globalisierung*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Beck, U. (2004) *Der kosmopolitische Blick oder: Krieg ist Frieden*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Beiner, R. (1995) 'Why citizenship constitutes a theoretical problem in the last decade of the twentieth century', in Beiner, R. (Ed.): *Theorizing Citizenship*, State University of New York Press, New York, pp.1–28.
- Benn, J. (2004) 'Consumer education between 'consumership' and citizenship: experiences from studies of young people', *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.108–116.
- Bennett, W.L. (2003) 'Communicating global activism: strengths and vulnerabilities of networked politics', *Information, Communication and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.143–168.
- Bilharz, M. (2007) 'Ratgeber zum nachhaltigen Konsum: wie viele Tipps sind genug?', [Guidebooks for sustainable consumption: How many tips are enough], *Haushalt und Bildung*, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp.54–62.
- Brinkmann, J. (2004) 'Looking at consumer behavior in a moral perspective', *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 51, pp.129–141.
- Buttle, N. (1997) 'Liberal republicanism', *Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp.147–152.
- CCN (The Consumer Citizenship Network) (2005) *Consumer Citizenship Education – Guidelines, Higher Education*, edited by Victoria, Vol. 1, W. Thoresen, CCN, Hamar, Norway.
- Consumers International (2007) *WCRD (World Consumer Rights Day)*, www.consumersinternational.org, 18.08.07.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1994) 'The changing quality of citizenship', in van Steenberg, B. (Ed.): *The Condition of Citizenship*, Sage, London, pp.10–19.
- Darby, M. and Karni, E. (1973) 'Free competition and the optimal amount of fraud', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp.67–88.
- de Leeuw, B. (2005) 'The world behind the product', *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1–2, pp.7–10.
- Delanty, G. (2000) *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Etzioni, A. (1993) *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*, Crown Books, New York.
- Graham, J.W. and Keeley, M. (1992) 'Hirschman's loyalty construct', *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp.191–200.
- Grefe, C. (2007) 'Energie für gutes Klima', *DIE ZEIT*, No. 6, p.6.
- Habermas, J. (1994) 'Citizenship and national identity', in van Steenberg, B. (Ed.): *The Condition of Citizenship*, Sage, London, pp.20–35.
- Halme, M. et al. (2005) *Sustainable Consumer Services: Business Solutions for Household Markets*, Earthscan, London.
- Halweil, B. and Nierenberg, D. (2004) 'Watching what we eat', in Norton, W.W. (Ed.): *State of the World, Special Focus: The Consumer Society*, The Worldwatch Institute, New York, London, pp.68–85.
- Hansen, U. and Schoenheit, I. (1986) 'Consumer affairs departments: a report on their development in the United States and their transferability to the federal republic of Germany', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp.445–468.

- Hansen, U. and Schrader, U. (1997) 'A modern model of consumption for a sustainable society', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp.443–468.
- Heater, D. (1999) *What is Citizenship?*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Hilton, M. (2005) 'The duties of citizens, the rights of consumers', *Consumer Policy Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp.6–12.
- Hirschman, A.O. (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Hirschman, A.O. (1974) 'Exit, voice, and loyalty': further reflections and a survey of recent contributions', *Social Science Information*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.7–26.
- Hirschman, A.O. (1976) 'Some uses of the exit-voice approach', *American Economic Review*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp.386–389.
- Hobbes, T. 1965 (1651) *Leviathan*, Everyman's Library, Dent, London.
- Hoffmann, E. (2007) 'Consumer integration in sustainable product development', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp.322–338.
- Kant, I. (1986 [1785]) *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1st ed., Reclam, Stuttgart.
- Karstens, B. and Belz, F.-M. (2006) 'Information asymmetries, labels and trust in the German food market, a critical analysis based on the economics of information', *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 25, pp.189–211.
- Kennedy, J.F. (1962) *Special Message to the Congress on Protecting the Consumer Interest*, 15 March, Washington DC.
- Kenny, M. (2003) 'Global civil society: a liberal-republican argument', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 29, pp.119–143.
- Kolk, A. (2004) 'A decade of sustainability reporting: developments and significance', *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.51–64.
- Kriegman, O. (2006) 'Dawn of the cosmopolitan, the hope of a global Citizens movement', *GTI Paper Series Frontiers of a Great Transition*, No. 15, Tellus Institute, Boston.
- Kuckartz, U. and Rheingans-Heintze, A. (2004) *Environmental Awareness in Germany*, Summary of the results, BMU, Berlin.
- Locke, J. 1970 (1689) 'The second treatise of government: an essay concerning the true original, extent, and end of civil government', *Two Treatises of Government*, A critical edition by Peter Laslett, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.285–446.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.
- Marshall, R.S. and Brown, D. (2003) 'Corporate environmental reporting: what's in a metric?', *Business Strategy and Environment*, Vol. 12, pp.87–106.
- Marshall, T.H. (1994 [1949]) 'Citizenship and social class', in Turner, B.S. and Hamilton, P. (Eds.): *Citizenship: Critical Concepts*, Routledge, London, New York, Vol. 2, pp.5–44.
- Matten, D. and Crane, A. (2005) 'Corporate citizenship: towards an extended theoretical conceptualization', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 30, pp.166–179.
- McGregor, S. (2002) 'Consumer citizenship: a pathway to sustainable development?', *Keynote Presentation at the International Conference on Developing Consumer Citizenship*, CCN, Hamar, Norway, ([www.consultmgregor.com/PDFs/norway%20keynote.pdf](http://www.consultmgregor.com/PDFs/norway%20keynote.pdf)).
- Micheletti, M. (2002) 'Consumer choice as political participation', *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, Vol. 105, No. 3, pp.218–234.
- Mont, O. and Bleischwitz, R. (2007) 'Sustainable consumption and resource management in the light of life cycle thinking', *European Environment*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp.59–76.
- Morsing, M. and Schultz, M. (2006) 'Corporate social responsibility communication: stakeholder information, response and involvement strategies', *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp.323–338.

- Nelson, P. (1970) 'Information and consumer behavior', *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp.311–329.
- OECD (2007) in Fliess, B., Lee, H-J., Dubreuil, O.L. and Agatiello, O. (Eds.): *CSR and Trade: Informing Consumers about Social and Environmental Conditions of Globalised Production*, OECD Trade Policy Working Paper No. 47 – PART I, by, OECD, Paris.
- Oldfield, A. (1990) 'Citizenship: an unnatural practice?', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 61, pp.177–187.
- Oliver, D. and Heater, D. (1994) *The Foundations of Citizenship*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.
- Peacock, M.S. (2006) 'The moral economy of parallel currencies: an analysis of local exchange trading systems', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 65, No. 5, pp.1059–1083.
- Pedersen, E.R. (2006) 'Making Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) operable: how companies translate stakeholder dialogue into practice', *Business and Society Review*, Vol. 111, No. 2, pp.137–163.
- Pocock, J.G.A. (1992) 'The ideal of citizenship since classical time', *Queens Quarterly*, Vol. 99, pp.33–55.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York, London.
- Reisch, L.A. (2004) 'Principles and visions of a new consumer policy', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp.1–42.
- Renner, M. (2004) 'Moving toward a less consumptive economy', in Norton, W.W. (Ed): *State of the World, Special Focus: The Consumer Society*, The Worldwatch Institute, New York, London, pp.96–119.
- Rezabakhsh, B., Bornemann, D., Hansen, U. and Schrader, U. (2006) 'Consumer power: a comparison of the old economy and the internet economy', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp.3–36.
- Rogers, E.M. (1995) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed., Free Press, New York.
- Rousseau, J-J. (1970 [1762]) 'The social contract or principles of political right', *Social contract: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau*, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, pp.237–440.
- Rubik, F. and Frankl, P. (Eds.) (2005) *The Future of Eco-labelling: Making Environmental Product Information Systems Effective*, Greenleaf, Sheffield.
- Sayer, A. (2000) 'Moral economy and political economy', *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 61, pp.79–104.
- Scherer, A.G. and Smid, M. (2000) 'The downwards spiral and the U.S. model business principles: why MNEs should take responsibility for the improvement of world-wide social and environmental conditions', *Management International Review*, Vol. 40, pp.351–371.
- Schoenheit, I. (2006) 'Do consumers care about CSR? Just saying or doing?', Presentation at the Conference 'CSR Benchmarks for Consumers', 18.12.2006, Brussels, ([www.imug.de/pdfs/verbraucher/hp\\_imug\\_Schoenheit\\_Do+Consumers+Care+CSR\\_KOM\\_2006\\_12\\_18\\_e.pdf](http://www.imug.de/pdfs/verbraucher/hp_imug_Schoenheit_Do+Consumers+Care+CSR_KOM_2006_12_18_e.pdf)).
- Schrader, U. (1999) 'Consumer acceptance of eco-efficient services, a German perspective', *Greener Management International*, No. 25, pp.105–121.
- Schrader, U. (2006) 'Ignorant advice: customer advisory service for ethical investment funds', *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.200–214.
- Schuler, D.A. and Cording, M. (2006) 'A corporate social performance–corporate financial performance behavioral model for consumers', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp.540–558.
- Smith, A. (1976 [1776]) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1st ed., Oxford University Press, London, Oxford.



- Stauss, B. (2000) 'Using new media for customer interaction: a challenge for relationship marketing', in Hennig-Thurau, T. and Hansen, U. (Eds): *Relationship marketing: Competitive Advantage Through Customer Satisfaction and Customer Retention*, Springer, Berlin, pp.233–254.
- Steinrücken, T. and Jaenichen, S. (2007) 'The fair trade idea: towards an economics of social labels', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp.201–217.
- Stokes, G. (1999) *Models of Citizenship and Democracy*, Open Learning Australia, University of Queensland, Brisbane.
- Stokes, G. (2002) 'Democracy and citizenship', in Carter, A. and Stokes, G. (Eds.): *Democratic Theory Today*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp.23–51.
- Stolle, D., Hooghe, M. and Micheletti, M. (2005) 'Politics in the supermarket: political consumerism as a form of political participation', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp.245–269.
- The Worldwatch Institute (2004) *State of the World, Special Focus: The Consumer Society*, W.W. Norton, New York, London.
- Thøgersen, J. (2005) 'How may consumer policy empower consumers for sustainable lifestyles?', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 28, pp.143–178.
- Töpfer, K. (1999) *United Nations Environment Programme Press Release*, UNEP, Nairobi (Kenya).
- United Nations (1999) *United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (as expanded in 1999)*, A/RES/54/449, United Nations, New York.
- United Nations (2006) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006*, United Nations, New York.
- von Hippel, E. (2005) *Democratizing Innovation*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Walzer, M. (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, Basic Books, New York.
- WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) (Ed.) (1987) *Our Common Future*: Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Willer, H. and Minou, Y. (Eds.) (2007) *The World of Organic Agriculture – Statistics and Emerging Trends*, IFOAM, FiBL, Bonn, Frick.
- Wüstenhagen, R. and Bilharz, M. (2006) 'Green energy market development in Germany: effective public policy and emerging customer demand', *Energy Policy*, Vol. 34, pp.1681–1696.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>It is debatable whether this list is disjunctive. Social and ecological issues are both ethically relevant.

<sup>2</sup>The importance of rights is acknowledged later on in the "Consumer Citizenship Education Guidelines", the source of the definition of the consumer citizen (CCN, 2005, p.12).

<sup>3</sup>"Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer" (Smith, 1976 [1776], p.660).

<sup>4</sup>However, it is important to note that Smith based his concept of the invisible hand on strong moral foundations. Consumer needs not only can, but should, be based on moral considerations and should reflect a sense for the public good (e.g., Sayer, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>To characterise consumer citizenship which supports sustainability, it is not enough to propagate the idea of political consumption without further qualification. For example, boycotts of Jewish businesses in Nazi Germany and other countries (Micheletti, 2002) or the boycott of the country band Dixie Chicks for their criticism of the war in Iraq (as depicted in the documentary 'Shut Up and Sing') are also instances of political consumption, but definitely not of consumer citizenship in support of sustainability.

<sup>6</sup>Loyalty – the third construct in Hirschman's book 'Exit, voice and loyalty' – is not of the same character as exit and voice. For him, loyalty is not a third behavioural alternative to deal with discontent, but a mediating feeling which "holds exit at bay and activates voice" (Hirschman, 1970, p.78; see also Graham and Keeley, 1992).

<sup>7</sup>The extension of consumers' responsibility as a consequence of the extension of rights would not apply to the right to safety. Here, the situation is the other way round. The more suppliers guarantee safety, the less important responsible behaviour from the consumers' side becomes. This explains once more why no corresponding duty to the right to safety has been formulated.