Between green consumerism and civic action

– A case study of the solutions to environmental problems brought up in Swedish upper secondary education

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Abstract:

Education is considered to be one of the most important tools for enabling the transition to a sustainable society, and it is commonly agreed that education for sustainable development (ESD) should be pluralistic, democratic and promote critical thinking. However, there are indications that education might be dominated by green consumerist approaches to solving environmental problems. If this is the case, it is highly problematic, since research has shown that green consumerism is not a reliable way to create a sustainable society. Some argue that a better way forward would be for people to engage for the environment in their role as citizens, rather than as consumers. This thesis investigates the prevalence of these two approaches in teaching and among students in Swedish upper secondary education through a case study of a class in Malmö, also looking into the feelings that the students have towards environmental problems. The theoretical framework includes literature on myths about sustainable consumption, the privatisation of responsibility, and emotions towards environmental problems. The findings indicate that the green consumerist perspective is dominant, but also that the teachers are aware of the problematic aspects of it, and that students do acknowledge the importance of civic engagement when the topic is brought up. Findings regarding the students' emotions are somewhat ambiguous. In conclusion, there seems to be a need for further highlighting the possibility of civic engagement in schools.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Topic

Environmental education and education for sustainable development (ESD) have been priorities in educational policy for decades, and even more so during the ongoing UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005-2014) (UNESCO 2014a). Education is considered to be one of the most important tools for enabling the transition to a sustainable society (UNESCO 2014b). There appears to be wide agreement that successful ESD needs to be pluralistic and democratic; in other words, teaching in schools needs to present children and young adults with a range of perspectives on sustainability and provide them with the tools to make up their own minds as to which perspective they believe to bear the greatest chances of success. Critical thinking is particularly emphasised as a crucial skill that young people need to acquire from the educational system in order to become well-equipped citizens of a society that is both democratic and sustainable (Gustafsson and Warner 2008; Huckle 2010; Jickling and Wals 2008; Sandell et al. 2003; Öhman 2008, 20-21).

The question is whether and how the above-mentioned qualities are put to practice in schools. Some academics and experts in the field claim that education today is, for the most part, influenced by an individualistic, consumerist perspective regarding what can be done about environmental problems (Selby 2013; Stevenson 2006, 284; Webster 2013). According to these authors, the educational system mainly teaches students how to influence society through their choices as consumers, rather than emphasising the possibilities of affecting society as citizens[1], through collective political action.[2] If this is the case, it hardly comes as a surprise. According to Bauman (1991, 261), the whole of society has gone through a privatisation of responsibility during the post-modern era, which means that politicians are no longer seen as bearing the responsibility for dealing with societal problems; this responsibility

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1 Political scientists distinguish between liberal and republican citizenship. While liberal citizenship is primarily concerned with rights, republican citizenship deals mainly with responsibilities and duties and puts less emphasis on rights (Dobson 2007). In this thesis, it is the latter that is in focus. While Dobson (2007, 280) considers action on the individual level to be an important part of such citizenship, Bauman (see theory section below) argues that there is a conflict between individual level action focused on consumerism, and coming together as citizens. Because of the concern for the contrast between action on the individual level and collective action in this thesis, it is Bauman's understanding of citizenship as requiring collective action that is used here.

2 The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "political" as: "Of, belonging to, or concerned with the form, organization, and administration of a state, and with the regulation of its relations with other states." (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146887?redirectedFrom=political#eid [accessed 29 April, 2014]). When I use the terms "political engagement" and "political action" in this thesis, I do not only refer to formal party politics, but also to other kinds of activities that citizens engage in to influence or change political policies and structures.

has instead been transferred to individuals, especially in their role as consumers. The educational system cannot be expected to be exempt from such a development, and it therefore seems likely that Selby, Stevenson and Webster could be correct in their analysis.

This situation would perhaps not give that much cause for concern if there was unambiguous evidence showing that green consumerism – "the production, promotion, and preferential consumption of goods and services on the basis of their pro-environment claims" (Akenji 2014, 13) – was an effective way to create a sustainable society. However, in a a recent report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers, Mont et al. (2013) refute this claim. The report shows that the ability of consumers to induce change through their spending habits has been exaggerated, and that consumer choices are to a large extent affected and shaped by societal structures and norms. It is therefore primarily politicians who need to be held accountable for creating institutions and structures that favour environmentally sustainable behaviour among the public. Instead of focusing on reducing the environmental impact of their own consumption, the role of citizens could then be to work collectively to achieve wider changes in society and political policies (Klintman 2013, 129).

1.2 Aim of the study

As previously mentioned, there are indications that education could be dominated by individualistic, consumerist messages on how to address environmental problems. However, I have not been able to find any research that investigates the matter empirically. In this thesis, I have therefore made such an investigation to examine which kinds of solutions to environmental problems that are brought up in schools[3]. I have also looked into how students themselves believe that they can contribute to solving environmental problems.[4] This is something that is not likely to be affected only by the teaching they receive in schools, but also by the general discourse in society, as expressed for example in the media, and by family and friends. Therefore schools could play an important role in presenting students with a

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3 This thesis fits into the broader framework of education for sustainable development – commonly understood as including environmental, social and economic dimensions – but I have chosen to address only the environmental aspects of sustainability. This decision was made in part to limit the scope of the thesis and thus make the topic more manageable, but also because I believe that the concept "environmental problem" is something that most people have an understanding of and can relate to, as opposed to the more vague concept "sustainability" or "sustainable development".

4 While conditions in the environment can be measured more or less unambiguously, defining something as a *problem* is a matter of human choice. In this thesis, I am primarily interested in investigating how students and teachers themselves understand solutions to environmental problems, and I have therefore decided not to define the concept "environmental problem", to allow them to express their own spontaneous understandings of the topic.

broader variety of possible ways of acting, in contrast with predominant discourses in society. Many young people today are reportedly experiencing eco-anxiety – which can be defined as an "overwhelming and sometimes debilitating concern for the deterioration of the environment" (Cossman 2013, 900), and there have been suggestions in public debate that the fact that young people consider themselves to bear a personal responsibility for changing society through their consumption contributes to this anxiety (Helmius and Johansson 2014). As a contrast, if they would feel angry instead, they might be moved to take action as citizens, since anger, which Lyman (2004, 140) considers to be "speech about a perceived injustice", "is an indispensable political emotion – for without angry speech the body politic would lack the voice of the powerless questioning the justice of the dominant order" (Lyman 2004, 133). Therefore, I have also found it relevant to look into the emotions that students have towards environmental problems and their solutions.

I have chosen to investigate the current situation in Swedish upper secondary education[5]. Sweden, because it is the country that I have the best knowledge of and access to, and upper secondary schools because it seems more likely that students at this level could be presented with the possibilities of both changing their own consumption habits and influencing society in general. At earlier stages in school, children are not likely to be as much in control of what they consume as when they reach their late teens. The possibilities of engaging as citizens are also greater at this age than earlier. The population of the study consisted of Swedish upper secondary classes, including students and their teachers, that I knew had worked with environmental issues in class. The reason for this was that I wanted to increase the chance of obtaining substantial results. After all, this study would be quite pointless if it turned out that the students and teachers included had not worked with environmental problems at all and were not interested in them. The lack of a sustainability perspective in teaching is also likely to be a problem in Swedish schools (Naturskyddsföreningen 2014a), but that was not what I wanted to focus on in this study.

1.3 Research questions

- How are solutions to environmental problems discussed in teaching in Swedish upper secondary education: as matters of individualistic, green consumerism; as requiring civic action to influence societal structures, or both?

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5 In Sweden, upper secondary education is for students aged 16-20. It is voluntary, but almost all students start studying at a programme at this level. Many do not graduate, however (Skolverket 2011a).

- How do Swedish upper secondary students primarily believe they can contribute to solving environmental problems: as consumers or as citizens?
- How do Swedish upper secondary students feel about environmental problems, and how do these feelings relate to the kinds of solutions that they see as available?

My working hypothesis was – based on the theoretical framework outlined above and developed further below – that discussions about the solutions to environmental problems in upper secondary education mainly bring up the possibilities of changing individual lifestyles through green consumerism, rather than the possibility of civic engagement. Consequently, I theorised that students primarily believe that they can contribute to solving environmental problems in their role as consumers, and not as citizens. Accordingly, I speculated that students would express feelings of anxiety and guilt concerning environmental problems, rather than being angry at powerful actors for not doing enough about them.

1.4 Outline of thesis

After this introduction, I will first describe and discuss the research design, methods used, and material collected for the study. In the final part of the chapter on methods, I discuss the reliability and validity of the study. The following chapter contains a description of the theoretical framework that is used to analyse the material, including literature on myths about sustainable consumption; the privatisation of responsibility; and feelings towards environmental problems. In the next chapter I present my findings, addressing the research questions one by one, and using the theoretical framework to analyse the material collected. This is followed by a final discussion that summarises the answers to the research questions and considers the implications of the results, finishing with some suggestions for further research on the topic.

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

The investigation is designed as a case study of an upper secondary class. The case study design has enabled me to make a thorough investigation of the case; thus providing me with a comprehensive understanding of it. This design seems especially useful for a phenomenon such as this one, that does not appear to have been studied empirically before, and where previous research therefore offers little help regarding the operationalisation of the research

questions. I hope that the results of this study will be useful for researching the topic further in the future, perhaps using quantitative methods, as suggested by George and Bennett (2005, 20), since it will hopefully offer some suggestions on how upper secondary teachers and students reason about possible solutions to environmental problems, and thus perhaps provide some basis for conducting a large scale study later on.

Another option would have been to use a quantitative survey to enable a generalisation of the findings and say something about which kind of solutions to environmental problems that are predominant in Swedish upper secondary schools in general. However, I believe that that would have been beyond what was possible to achieve in this study, considering the limited time and resources at my disposal. Another possibility to study the topic in a more quantitative manner would have been to use content analysis to study a wide range of teaching materials used in upper secondary education when discussing environmental problems and their solutions. However, I think there is reason to doubt that there are any such textbooks or teaching materials that are widely used in Swedish upper secondary schools. I rather suspect that the methods of teaching vary a lot between individual teachers. Furthermore, any teaching materials used are not likely to fully represent all the aspects of environmental problems brought up in the classroom, which would have given reason to question the validity of the results. Therefore I deemed the case study design to be more appropriate.

Selecting a class that is known to have worked with environmental problems has provided a rather tough test for the theoretical framework employed in the study, thus giving more reason for confidence in the results if they turn out to support the theory. My hypothesis was that the solutions to environmental problems brought up in Swedish schools are focused on green consumerism rather than the possibility of civic engagement. However, if there is any place in the school system (below university level) where a more balanced perspective, including both green consumerism and civic engagement, could be found, I believe it would most likely be in upper secondary school – since it is quite possible to imagine students at this level taking action as citizens, in contrast to at earlier levels – and in classes with teachers who are known to emphasise environmental problems in their teaching, since these teachers are perhaps more likely to be aware of other perspectives saying that there is a need for structural changes to address environmental problems.[6] However, the case study design does not allow drawing

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6   This is debatable though, since even people who are deeply involved in environmental issues are likely to be strongly affected by the general discourse focusing on green consumerism.

conclusions directly from this study to Swedish upper secondary classes in general. The purpose is rather to see if the theoretical framework employed can be used to understand how solutions to environmental problems are talked about in this context (Yin 2003, 10).

Yin – an experienced researcher and author of widely used books on case study research (2003, 181) – argues that, ideally, the identities of both cases and individual participants in studies should be revealed in reports (Yin 2003, 157). In this study, I see no reason to include the names of the teachers and students, or revealing which class they represent, and I also think the knowledge that their names would be publicised might have prevented some people from speaking freely, or from participating at all. However, it does seem reasonable to include the name of the school, the programme and the level that the students are at, to enable readers to evaluate the selection and better understand the context. Providing this information means that the specific class, and thus the teachers interviewed, could potentially be identified. All respondents were made aware of these conditions when they agreed to participate in the study.

The school in which the class is located is Nya Malmö Latin. This school, which is run by the municipality, is quite unique in that it, since it started last year, cooperates closely with Naturskyddsföreningen (The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)[7], the City of Malmö and Malmö University to ensure that a sustainability perspective is included in all the school's activities (Hellmark 2014). The class that has been selected for this study is a first year class taking the Natural Science Programme. It was picked with the aid of the project leader from Naturskyddsföreningen, who helped me get in touch with a class that seemed to be suitable for the study, on the grounds of having brought up environmental issues in class (as the school is newly established, the sustainability perspective has not been fully implemented in all classes yet). There are 32 students in the class. Statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education show that 78% of the students in the Natural Science Programme at this school have parents with a high level of education (Skolverket Siris 2014a)[8]. The figures for upper secondary students in the country as a whole and the City of Malmö are 48% (Skolverket Siris 2014c) and 47% respectively (Skolverket Siris 2014d). This indicates that the socio-economic status of these students might be above average. However, it is difficult to speculate on how

7 Naturskyddsföreningen claims to be the largest and most influential environmental organisation in Sweden, having more than 200 000 members. They work with a wide range of environmental issues both in Sweden and in cooperation with partner organisations around the world (Naturskyddsföreningen 2014b).
8 Defined as when at least one of the parents has acquired a minimum of 30 higher education credits (equivalent to one semester of full-time studies) (Skolverket Siris 2014b).

this might have affected the results of this study.

2.2 Research methods

Yin (2003, 97-98) stresses the importance of using several methods within the same case study to increase the validity of the results. In this study, I have used two different methods, which are outlined and discussed below.

2.2.1 Written answers

The first part of the study, as far as the students were concerned, was to ask all the students in the class to write a short text explaining how they think they can contribute to solving environmental problems. I was inspired by Autio and Heinonen (2004, 143), who used a similar method to collect information about Finnish upper secondary school students' views on green consumerism. These students were given an hour to write an essay, but I decided that 15 minutes sufficed here. This was partly for practical reasons, as it was likely to be easier to get teachers to agree to their class participating if they did not have to use a whole lesson for the task, but also because I believe most students already have some idea of what could be done to solve environmental problems, and that they would not need to think about the topic for long. I was also primarily interested in their immediate responses to the question, and did thus not need them to think very carefully about it. Furthermore, I did not need the answers to be particularly long, but only stating their immediate thoughts. Nevertheless, the fact that writing allows the students to consider the question in private, being able to give some thought to their answers, is an advantage of the method (Ibid.). The answers collected were completely confidential and only read by me, and participation was voluntary. Autio and Heinonen (2004, 150) point out that the setting of the study is likely to have an effect on the answers given by the respondents; thus, approaching students during class hours might make them answer the way they are usually asked to do in school assignments. Considering that my main interest was to find out how the topic under study here is treated in schools, I do not regard this as a problem in this case. Furthermore, if the students did not answer the questions in a way that was natural to them, the interviews have hopefully made up for this by allowing for further probing (though I do not know which written answer belongs to which interviewee). Overall, this method is very useful in that it allows for easy collection of a substantial amount of answers (Ibid.).

In order to collect the material, I came to the class during a lesson to introduce myself and the

study. I made sure to only mention the general topic and not the theoretical framework, to avoid undue influence of the students' answers. I wrote the questions to be answered – What do you think are the most important things you can do to contribute to solving environmental problems? Why? – on the whiteboard, and asked the students to write an answer to this on a piece of paper, also indicating their gender. I considered gender to be a potentially relevant factor to take into account, since research has shown that there are gender differences in attitudes to environmental problems and consumption; girls generally being more inclined to change their behaviour in order to reduce their impact on the environment (Autio and Heinonen 2004, 146). I also told them *not* to write down their names, and that their answers would be kept confidential, but that they could be quoted in my thesis, which would be read by others. To make it as easy as possible for the students to express themselves freely, the questions were put to them in Swedish[9], and I also asked them to write their answers in Swedish. I made sure to collect the answers in such a way that it was not revealed who wrote what. While I was in the classroom talking to the students, I also introduced the idea of continuing the conversation about these issues after finishing the study, and offered to come and present the results to them in class, as well as sharing the finished thesis with whoever might be interested.

I received 28 answers from thirteen women and nine men. Six people did not state their gender, or were unclear about it. Most of the students seem to have taken the questions seriously, but many did not answer the question "Why?", and some of those who did do not seem to have understood that what I was asking for was why they believe in *these* solutions, rather than others, even though I tried to clarify this when I gave them the question. I did not think about clarifying that I was not asking for what they actually do, but what they believe they could potentially do, but luckily the teacher in charge of the lesson was observant enough to point this out to the students. When they started writing, the students were all silent and thinking to themselves, but as soon as some had handed in their answers they started talking, and only after a while did I realise that some of those who were still writing might be talking to each other about their answers as well. Yet by then it was too late to point out that I wanted

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9   The phrasing of the question in Swedish was: "Vad tror du är de viktigaste sakerna du kan göra för att bidra till att lösa miljöproblem? Varför?" In Swedish there is a difference between the singular "you" – "du" – and the plural "you" – "ni". It might be argued that the use of the singular pronoun may have influenced the students to mainly think about individualistic, green consumerist ways of tackling environmental problems. However, as my intention was for the students to answer the questions from a single person's perspective, and not in a general way (as in what society as a whole or the government could do), I preferred the more direct "du" to the more vague "ni". If I would have used "ni", the students might have been confused about what group of people I was referring to.

them to answer the questions individually, and thus there is some risk that some of the students might have influenced each others' answers. However, it would have been hard to guard completely against this. Generally speaking, the written answers also resembled each other to such a large extent that is seems unlikely that this would have resulted from the influence of the students on each other. Thus, in effect, I do not expect this to have had any substantial influence on the result.

2.2.2 Interviews

The written answers were complemented with semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students. This method was suitable since it allows for a rather free-flowing conversation, at the same time as there is some structure to the questions asked (May 2011, 135). I wanted to get an in-depth understanding of how solutions to environmental problems are brought up in upper secondary education and how students feel about them, but for that I needed answers to a certain set of questions. Semi-structured interviews fulfil all these demands (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 124).

Yin (2003, 92) stresses that statements made in interviews can be questioned for a number of reasons, such as the bias of the respondent, failing memory, or that they have difficulties expressing themselves clearly. He therefore argues that the data collected through interviews should be confirmed using other methods. Regarding the students in this study, the interview data is complemented with written answers, which could reveal potential inconsistencies. Moreover, since the primary goal is to ascertain the students' own thoughts and feelings, there is little risk that the issues raised by Yin has posed problems for this study. When it comes to the teachers, their statements about the contents of their teaching are corroborated by the interviews with the students. There is also little reason to believe that the participants would have wanted to hide the truth from me, as long as they did not think that I expected certain answers from them. To try to ensure that they did not, I only informed them about the general topic of the study, and not about the theoretical framework or the hypothesis, since that could potentially have influenced their answers (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 72). The teachers were asked to answer the questions with the class studied here in mind, but in some cases they might have referred to their teaching in general rather than this class in particular. However, I do not expect this to have had any detrimental effect on the results.

In the class studied here, there were two teachers who had included environmental problems

in their teaching enough to be able to participate in the study; a teacher of biology and science studies, and a teacher of physics and mathematics. By interviewing both of them, I was able get a fuller understanding of the solutions presented to the students in school. To find participants among the students, I asked for volunteers when meeting the class to collect the written answers. Seven people expressed an interest, but two of them never replied when I tried to contact them, and I therefore had to ask one of the teachers for help to find two others. It is possible that these ways of finding the interviewees have affected the results, but it would have been hard for me to reach the students in any other way. I have tried to get a group of interviewees with some diversity in regard to gender, ethnicity, and level of environmental concern to increase the possibility of getting results that reflect the full range of standpoints in the group. However, all the interviewed students stated that they were very interested or at least somewhat interested in environmental issues, while the teachers told me that there are varying degrees of interest in the class, with some students not interested in environmental issues at all. Thus, it seems as if these students have not been represented in the interviews. When I asked for interviewees I did say that I also wanted to interview people who were not interested in environmental issues, but perhaps it is not very surprising that these people did not volunteer to be interviewed. Nevertheless, participation had to be voluntary, so there was probably little I could have done to increase the participation of these students. Even if all the interviewed students did turn out to be at least somewhat interested in environmental issues, only one of them said that this interest was part of the reason that they had chosen this school for their upper secondary studies.

The number of interviewees included in a study should be enough to cover the relevant aspects of the topic under investigation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 113). In this case, I regarded seven students as reasonable, as I did not expect the answers to vary greatly between them (considering they are all living in the same society and are exposed to the same teaching), and thus most types of answers should be covered even with such a small number of respondents. This was confirmed during the interviews, as the same themes repeatedly came up.

Eder and Fingerson (2001, 183) argue that it is more appropriate to interview children and adolescents in groups than individually. The fact that the young participants outnumber the adult interviewer is said to balance the unequal power relations inherent in the relationship between adults and youths. However, the group setting can also affect participants' answers

due to peer pressure (Ibid., 193). I also believe that all students might not be comfortable expressing their feelings towards environmental problems in a group, and I therefore considered   individual interviews to be more suitable for this study. Nevertheless, I do consider unequal power relations to be a cause for concern – in all interviews, but especially when interviewing non-adults – and I therefore had to stay attentive to signals from the interviewees during the interviews and do my best to establish rapport and make them feel comfortable (May 2011, 143; Adler and Adler 2001, 530). One way of doing this in relation to the students was to be prepared to share my own experiences (Adler and Adler 2001, 530), taking care to do this in such a way that it did not affect the answers to the interview questions. It was also important to emphasise during the interviews that there were no right or wrong answers (Eder and Fingerson 2001, 184). For the sake of convenience for the participants, all interviews were conducted on the school's premises, and I always asked the interviewees to suggest a place to sit down for the interview. Hopefully, this ensured that they were as comfortable as possible during the interviews.

Warren (2001, 91-2) points out that recording interviews may affect the interviewees' answers. This is, no doubt, important to keep in mind, but the potential benefits of recording are so substantial that it seemed like an indispensable tool for this study. Reliability is greatly enhanced by the possibility of transcribing the interviews afterwards, instead of relying on note-taking that could accidentally omit important passages (May 2011, 151-2). Furthermore, recording enables the researcher to keep their focus on formulating good questions (May 2011, 152), which could improve the validity of the results. All interviews were conducted in Swedish to ensure that the participants were able to express themselves in a way that would be as natural to them as possible. When transcribing the interviews, I tried to stay as close as possible to how the respondents expressed themselves, but I used written language, since I believe this provides a better representation of what the participants actually communicated to me during the interviews. I used the same approach when translating the quotes that are included in the thesis, trying to transfer statements made in Swedish to correct English at the same time as keeping as much as possible of the phrasing of each interviewee.

Conducting interview research always "requires a delicate balance between the interviewer's concern for pursuing interesting knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interview subject" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 16), and even more careful ethical consideration needs to be taken when interviewing young people (Eder and Fingerson 2001).

However, I believe students at the upper secondary level are old enough to make up their own minds on whether or not to participate in a study such as this. Still, it was important to take care to ensure that all participants were fully aware of the conditions of their participation in the study (May 2011, 140-41; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 70-71): that the finished study will be read by others, that statements made in the interviews could be quoted, that the interviews would be recorded, and so on. Interviewees were ensured confidentiality, but I considered it necessary to state their school, programme and grade in the thesis, and it was important to make these conditions clear from the outset (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 72). To ensure that it is not possible for anyone who might know which students were interviewed for this thesis (such as some of their teachers) to figure out who said what, I have chosen not to state the gender of each interviewee or when each interview was conducted. In any event, no gender differences were apparent in the material collected.

The interviews were conducted with the assistance of interview guides (see Appendices A and B), which specified the information to be given to the interviewees before the interview and outlined the main questions to be asked and suggested follow-up questions. I tried to phrase the questions as simply as possible, especially in the interviews with the students, to ensure that the participants understood what I wanted to know (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 134). I started out with broader, more open questions, in order to get at the interviewees' own understandings of the topic, then moving on to more specific questions regarding the themes of this study, but without leading the participants in any specific direction. Only after these questions did I ask more leading questions that related specifically to my hypothesis. This approach was taken to avoid undue influence of the interviewees' answers, but at the same time enable me to draw valid conclusions from the interviews with my theoretical framework in mind (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 135, 172-3). The length of the interviews varied between 20 and 45 minutes. The atmosphere was generally relaxed, and even though some of the students seemed a bit nervous, I never had the feeling that the interviewees censored their answers. Nevertheless, some students did consider the questions relating to politics difficult to answer since they were not used to thinking about the topic. One of the teachers was interviewed before I collected the written answers from the students, and all but one of the students were interviewed after I had interviewed both teachers. This was done simply for practical reasons, as I asked the teachers and students to suggest the time that would be most convenient for them. While it cannot be ruled out completely that the teachers might somehow have influenced the answers given by the students, or that the students have

influenced each other's answers, I find this unlikely, since I did not sense any such indications during the interviews.

Several researchers (Eder and Fingerson 2001, 185-87; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 314-15) emphasise the importance of conducting research that is beneficial for the people who participate in the study, as well as for society at large. My ambition with this study is to do just that. Hopefully, the study will show students that it is not primarily their responsibility as individuals to solve environmental problems, which means that they could put less pressure on themselves and more on actors with more power. I hope that the teachers would see it in this way too, but I do see a risk that they could be offended by the results if they would perceive my analysis as critique against their teaching practices, especially if they would feel that I deceived them by not revealing my analytical framework before interviewing them (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 71). This might be difficult to prevent, but I have attempted to do so by asking explicit questions about the different perspectives on solutions to environmental problems during the interviews (towards the end, after the more open-ended questions), thus giving them the opportunity to justify their choices of perspectives in teaching. If they are interested, I would also like to engage in a conversation with both teachers and students after the completion of the study, to explore if and how the results might be useful for them.

2.3 Method of analysis

I have not adhered to any specific method of analysis when analysing the interviews and texts collected for this study, but I have followed Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009, 235-37) suggestion to take the theoretical framework of the study as a starting point, and I have then used that to carry out a critical reading of the material, which is similar to what Yin (2003, 111-12) argues is the best method of analysis for case studies. One way of concretising this procedure is to use pattern-matching, which "compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one" (Yin 2003, 116), to see if the theory fits reality. When analysing the written answers, I have categorised the answers to organise the material, reveal patterns, and allow for some quantification (May 2011, 152-53; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 203). Kvale and Brinkmann stress the importance of the interviewer asking follow-up questions that "verify his or her interpretations of the subject's answers" (2009, 164) during interviews to facilitate the analysis. This may be an ideal that is difficult to achieve in reality, but it is nevertheless important to aim for (Ibid.).

In order for the analysis not to end up being one-sided, it is important to be overt about the analytical questions asked to the material, clearly motivate any interpretations, and to reflect critically on the possible prejudice inherent in them, and on the existence of other possible interpretations of the results than those posited by the theory (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 238-39; Yin 2003, 112-13); to keep the theoretical framework and hypotheses in mind while conducting the study, but not to let them stand in the way of seeing things that are not consistent with the theory (May 2011, 236). It is necessary to stay alert to the risk of over-interpreting statements and ascribing meanings to respondents that they would not recognise themselves (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 218). This is a fine balance, since one of the reasons for conducting this study to begin with was to make visible hidden assumptions that are prevalent in everyday practices.

2.4 The reliability and validity of the study

Reliability concerns the "consistency and trustworthiness of research findings" and their reproducibility (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 245). To ensure reliability, I tried to stay attentive throughout the collection and processing of the material, taking care not to carry it out in a way that unduly affected the answers of the respondents, and to be thorough during the transcription and translations of interviews and quotes, to make sure that participants' answers were not misrepresented (Ibid.).

Validity, on the other hand, has to do with "the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement. […] Validity has in the social sciences pertained to whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate." (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 246). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, 247-49) argue that validation is an important part of all steps of the research process, and that it depends on the researcher's ability to argue convincingly for the decisions and interpretations made. One way to increase the validity of claims made is to let the participants in the study check the researcher's writings, to see if they correspond to their understanding of their situation: "The informants and participants may still disagree with an investigator's conclusions and interpretations, but these reviewers should not disagree over the actual facts of the case." (Yin 2003, 159). Yin (2009, 160) contends that the researcher is not bound to change the report according to all the remarks made in the review, but I see a risk here that those who would get to comment on a report might expect that their objections would be taken into account. The main purpose of this study is not to say something about the lives of

the individual participants, but to see how their situation can be understood theoretically. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, 255), it is in such cases primarily the research community that should determine whether conclusions are valid or not, so in this case, I did not think it was necessary to let the respondents comment on the draft of the report. However, I did want to interpret the findings in a way that was empathetic to the participants, and I do hope to share the results with them after the report is finished. Having this in mind has in itself provided a check on the analysis of the results.

There is also the notion of pragmatic validity, which refers to the improvement of the social situation under study: "New qualitative interpretations can alter the self-understandings of those they describe, and the validity of social theories can thus be tested by examining the quality of the practices they inform and encourage." (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 257). It may be a presumptuous expectation, but I hope that the results of this study could in some way serve this function.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Myths about sustainable consumption

One of the theoretical starting-points for this thesis is a recent report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which addresses common myths about sustainable consumption (Mont et al. 2013). The authors argue that the best way towards a sustainable society is for governments to take the lead by creating structures that favour sustainability, instead of relying on individuals to take responsibility for changing their consumption habits in a way that leads to sustainability (Mont et al. 2013, 10). Mont et al. (2013, 13) claim that: "Existing policies that directly or indirectly address consumption mostly promote 'green' consumerism and thereby aim to promote sustainability through existing consumer culture, even though it is becoming increasingly clear that these approaches do not lead to aggregate reductions of environmental and social impacts associated with consumption." The authors proceed by presenting ten myths that they argue are prevalent in Nordic policy-making on sustainability, and which they then argue against:

1. "Green consumption is the solution" (Mont et al. 2013, 23). The idea is that consumers should learn to take the environment into account when deciding what to buy, selecting products that are produced in ways that are more efficient and less harmful to the environment, and that this would lead to significant improvements in societal

sustainability (Ibid.). While Mont et al (2013, 21-23, 34) do consider such changes in production and consumption to be important parts of a shift towards sustainability, these changes are currently offset by an increase in overall consumption levels (Mont et al. 2013, 24). What people choose to buy depends on several factors, including prices, and the fact that "green" products are often more expensive makes green consumption an unreliable path to sustainability (Mont et al. 2013, 27).

2. "Consumers should lead the shift to sustainability" (Mont et al. 2013, 34). This myth is based on the notion that consumer choices are the primary forces behind what is available on the market (Ibid.). In reality, individuals are highly affected by the social settings in which they live – including norms, infrastructures and commercial and political urges to consume – and are therefore not entirely free to choose what is best for the environment (Mont et al. 2013, 36-38). To really increase sustainability, "[s]ystemic changes in the prevailing economic institutions and business models, regulations and infrastructures are required." (Mont et al. 2013, 46).

3. "If everyone does a little we will achieve a lot" (Mont et al. 2013, 47). Relying on this idea entails two risks: people might be encouraged not to do anything, since they rely on others to do their bit, and they might be discouraged from doing anything, since they know that everyone else does not do their bit (Mont et al. 2013, 47-8). There is also evidence to show that small individual actions actually do not add up to large effects, even if everyone does their part (Mont et al. 2013, 48, 50).

4. "Small and easy environmental actions will spill-over to bigger changes" (Mont et al. 2013, 54). Research shows that this is unlikely to happen (Mont et al. 2013, 55-6). There is rather a risk that the emphasis on minor behaviour changes will lead people to believe that there is no need for more radical reforms (Mont et al. 2013, 55).

5. "More information leads to sustainable behaviour" (Mont et al. 2013, 61). What decisions people take does not only depend on the information they have access to, but also on feelings, habits and social norms (Mont et al. 2013, 62, 64). Information can potentially be effective, but only in combination with other measures to encourage sustainable behaviour (Mont et al. 2013, 69).

6. "Appealing to people's self-interest is the path to sustainable behaviour" (Mont et al. 2013, 70). This approach may actually be counterproductive, since it instills in people the idea that it is acceptable to be concerned primarily with your own well-being – even at the expense of others, and all reforms needed to create a sustainable society

are not likely to be personally beneficial to everyone (Mont et al. 2013, 71).

7. "Sustainability means 'living in caves'" (Mont et al. 2013, 77). This myth is based on the conception that consumption and wealth make people happy, while sustainable lifestyles do not (Ibid.). This is not necessarily true, and research shows that other factors than wealth play a bigger role in determining levels of happiness (Mont et al. 2013, 78). To avoid decreased well-being in the future, it is ever more important that we tackle environmental problems now, rather than later (Mont et al. 2013, 84).

8. "People become happier if they gain more money and increase material levels of consumption" (Mont et al. 2013, 85). This is only true up to a certain level of consumption, where people are able to satisfy their basic needs (Mont et al. 2013, 87). Furthermore, what effects an increase in income has depends on other things than just the income itself, such as social equality and cultural factors (Mont et al. 2013, 86).

9. "Private ownership of all kinds of products is desirable – sharing is not" (Mont et al. 2013, 91). There is currently a resurgence of sharing and cooperation, and many people experience negative side effects of owning too much stuff (Mont et al. 2013, 92, 100).

10. "Consumption policies are too controversial to be accepted by the public" (Mont et al. 2013, 100). In actual fact, governmental policy-making is often used to change different aspects of people's values and behaviour, for example regarding smoking and using seatbelts, and there is no reason to believe that it could not be used to change consumption patterns as well (Mont et al. 2013, 101).

Several other authors (e.g. Schor 1998, 163; Gardner and Stern 2002; Moran 2010) point to the same fact that underlies much of the report referenced above: individual people's action space is limited by their social contexts. Isenhour (2010) argues that, while it is often assumed that providing people with more information about environmental problems will encourage them to behave in a way that furthers sustainability, this approach is especially inappropriate in Sweden, since there is already a high level of awareness about the problems within the Swedish population. The wish to conform to social norms is here a much more important factor preventing people from adopting more sustainable lifestyles (Ibid.).

Akenji (2014, 13, 16-17), makes a useful distinction between green consumerism – which in essence means shifting consumption to less harmful products and which has been the preferred strategy of governments, companies and intergovernmental organisations – and sustainable consumption, which calls for reducing consumption and acknowledging that

consumers are not entirely free to choose what would be best for the environment. He argues that green consumerism "provides an illusion of progress which distracts from the urgent structural changes needed in order to achieve sustainable development" (Akenji 2014, 13). A shift to sustainable production and consumption practices is an essential component in the transition to a sustainable society, but green consumerism is not a helpful strategy for achieving this (Akenji 2014, 15-16), since the fact that responsibility is handed over to consumers means "targeting the most visible stakeholder rather than the most influential" (Akenji 2014, 17). For sustainable consumption to be possible, we would need "the right attitude from stakeholders; facilitators to enable actions reflect attitudes [*sic*]; and appropriate infrastructure that would make sustainable lifestyles the easier option" (Akenji 2014, 18). The group of stakeholders needing to change their attitudes not only includes individual consumers, but also companies, politicians, and all other relevant actors in society (Ibid.).

Carlsson-Kanyama, Klintman and Mont (2013, 100) point to the interesting fact that the approach to environmental problems among politicians and companies is rather unique in that they hand over most of the responsibility for solving these problems to individuals; something that is not done regarding problems such as war and criminality. At the same time as being expected to reduce their own negative impact on the environment, consumers are not encouraged to make any radical lifestyle changes (Carlsson-Kanyama, Klintman and Mont 2013, 101). Even if these authors see radical individual lifestyle change as having only limited direct effect within current social structures, they do acknowledge that such initiatives could serve to inspire others and initiate a wider debate on the possibility of creating a sustainable society (Carlsson-Kanyama, Klintman and Mont 2013, 138-9).

Klintman (2013, 100) and Buttel (2003, 336) both point to the importance of people engaging as citizens to change the course of society. In Klintman's (2013, 129) words:

> [W]e as citizen-consumers, rather than being expected to dramatically reduce environmental harm as autonomous, anonymous individuals (which we are bad at) instead 'ought to' do what we are good at: discuss and collaborate with friends, neighbours, colleagues, as well as more distant acquaintances, and form or join groups, cooperatives, coalitions, networks, alliances, and NGOs, through which our social motivation may direct us to reduce our environmental harm and to initiate and support changes in policies in a sustainable direction. The moral imperative directed to policy makers and companies would be to stimulate and facilitate such activities, and to create policy sequences that may help to speed up changes in social norms.

Civic engagement is especially important given the likely tendency of governments and

companies to try to resist changes that threaten their power and dominance (Klintman 2013, 104-5; Buttel 2003, 315).

3.2 The privatisation of responsibility

An explanation for the prevalence of the myths described above can be found in Zygmunt Bauman's notion of the privatisation of responsibility taking place in post-modern society (Bauman 1991, 261). According to Bauman (1991, 261-2; 2001, 45), the inhabitants of society are today primarily seen as – and see themselves as – consumers and isolated individuals, rather than citizens. Being cast in these roles is not a matter of choice, but a process that we are all subject to (Bauman 2001, 46). According to Bauman (2007, 6, 57, 122) it is not only what we normally think of as goods that are consumed in the society of consumers; people themselves are turned into commodities on a market, and, consequently, they see other people as commodities too. The act of consuming, thus staying a part of consumer culture, is what gives people their value as commodities, which makes it very difficult for people to opt out and reduce their consumption, since this would result in social exclusion (Bauman 2007, 56-57, 99, 124). In this society, happiness is said to depend on individual choices and consumption (Bauman 2007, 45, 75), which is likely to make people even more inclined to devote themselves to consuming, rather than other activities. Consumerist culture also encourages people to live here and now, without concern for the possible future effects of what they do (Bauman 2007, 105), making concern for environmental consequences unlikely. If people ever were to become satisfied with what they already have and limit their own consumption, this would seriously threaten consumer society (Bauman 2007, 46, 98).

Individualisation is a key force maintaining consumer society, since it brings with it the possibility to use resistance bred by the system to contribute to sustaining it (Bauman 2007, 48-49). Even visions of a different and better society are seen as "the personal concerns and responsibility of individuals." (Bauman 2007, 49). While more and more responsibilities and ethical concerns are transferred to individuals, politicians recede from power and maintain that there are no alternatives to the current state of things (Bauman 2007, 65-66, 89; 1999, 4). This individualised responsibility makes people blame themselves and feel bad about their own insufficiencies regarding both their own lives and society in general, rather than finding faults with political or economic regimes, even though their freedom is in reality circumscribed by forces beyond their control (Bauman 2007, 87, 91; 2001, 5, 9). This

prevents people from taking collective action to influence government policies, and they instead internalise the responsibility for solving common problems and blame themselves for failing to achieve their goals (Bauman 1991, 261-2). Bauman (1991, 261) contends that this situation makes people feel guilty and ashamed, thus directing their frustration inwards, rather than feeling angry at the external forces that are really causing the problems. The retreat of politics is paralleled by a rise in "unpolitical consumer activism" (Bauman 2007, 146), which, in Bauman's view (2007, 146-7), does little to reverse the declining trust in politics. Many problems, such as many of those relating to the environment, are ultimately not possible to solve by consuming differently (Bauman 1991, 273).

Being primarily a consumer and an individual does, for Bauman (2007, 149; 2001, 48-49), stand in opposition to acting as a citizen, since consumer society puts such high demands on individuals to keep consuming that they have little time and energy left for other engagements, such as civic action. Moreover, individuals today feel a lack of social security that prevents them from acting as citizens (Bauman 2001, 55). Bauman (2007, 65-6; 2001, 50-3, 106; 1999, 19, 28-9) argues that we need to come together to solve the societal problems that we face, but this is made difficult by the fact that neither ordinary people nor politicians are in control of the development any more, since this control has been handed over to markets and corporations: "while the traditional agents are no longer capable of effective action, the truly powerful and resourceful agents have escaped into hiding and operate beyond the reach of all established means of political action" (Bauman 1999, 98). The logic of the market is made out to be natural and unchanging, and therefore people cannot see any obvious ways to change the structures governing their lives (Bauman 1999, 75). Consumerism itself has also caused fragmentation of previously existing social groups (Bauman 2007, 77-8), which might make it even harder for people to reconnect to one another and take action together.

3.3 Emotions regarding environmental problems

Cossman argues that the experience of eco-anxiety in neoliberal societies necessitates the use of techniques of self-governance – "a mode of governance in which individuals are called on to govern themselves through the choices they make" (2013, 895) – which include green consumerism (Cossman 2013, 897-8). Research on children and adolescents has shown that anxiety over environmental problems is prevalent among them (Ojala 2012, 538; Strife 2012, 37-8). This anxiety is often accompanied by a sense of helplessness in face of the problems,

which derives from feeling a lack of power to do anything about them, but it can also inspire action (Ojala 2012, 538; Strife 2012, 38, 49).

It has been argued that adults, among them educators, ought to counter young people's feelings of despair by presenting them with possibilities to contribute to solving environmental problems, thus enabling them to develop action competence (Strife 2012, 50-2). Given what has been stated above – that actions focused on the individual level only have very limited potential to make substantial contributions to solving the problems – it would seem reasonable to avoid focusing on such actions and instead focus on empowering young people to act as citizens, at least when they reach adolescence.[10] Results from a study by Ellis (2004, 94) indicate that young people do care about the development of society, but that they are, nevertheless, unlikely to "engage in organised political activity aimed at promoting positive social change" (Ibid.).

Psychologist Maria Ojala (2007, 107) argues that engaging in individual-level activities to address environmental problems can be a source of both hope and guilt, since it makes people feel that they do have some space for action regarding environmental problems, but also that they fail to take as much action as would be necessary to solve them. She also mentions several positive effects of working against environmental problems together with others as a volunteer in an organisation, and suggests that the possibility of engaging in this way could be highlighted in secondary education to give students a sense of hope and meaningfulness, along with reminders that more powerful actors also bear responsibility for solving the problems (Ojala 2007, 107, 113).

The emotions that people have towards a problem are also important factors that can help explain why they engage politically in the first place (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001, 16). Different feelings tend to make people act in different ways; while some are conducive to political engagement, others can be debilitating (Ibid.). Emotions are often highly affected by the social settings that people find themselves in, and there is thus considerable room to influence them (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001, 12-13; Kemper 2001, 70). One feeling that can be a powerful motivation for collective action and political protest is anger (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001, 16-7; Polletta and Amenta 2001, 305). Anger has often

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10 It could well be a less suitable strategy for younger children, since they might not be independent enough to be able to engage in such action.

been described as a negative and destructive feeling, but it can be argued that this framing is often a strategy used by those in power to maintain their privileged position and cast those protesting against them as purely irrational and therefore unworthy of attention (Lyman 2004, 133-5). According to Ojala (2007, 72), anger can be a positive emotion that can help people deal with their worries in a constructive way and take action to influence politics. Ojala (2012, 555; 2007, 103-6) also emphasises the importance of instilling hope in young people to make them feel that all is not lost. Again, referring back to what has been stated above about myths about sustainable consumption, it seems important to ensure that such hope is realistic and not deceptive.

4. Findings and analysis

4.1 How are solutions to environmental problems discussed in teaching in Swedish upper secondary education: as matters of individualistic, green consumerism; as requiring civic action to influence societal structures, or both?

Generally speaking, when referring to the kind of action that can be taken by individuals to alleviate environmental problems, both teachers and students in this study mostly mentioned individualistic, green consumerist solutions when asked what kind of solutions are brought up in class. Several people also referred to things that can be done on higher levels by authorities and companies, such as increasing the use of renewable energy, but not with any clear connections to action that can be taken by individuals, and no one spontaneously mentioned civic action in the form of engagement in politics or non-governmental organisations as a topic that had come up in class, so obviously this was not something that immediately came to mind for the interviewees. The biology and science studies teacher did talk about a project where the class will cooperate with the municipality to come up with suggestions on sustainable city development, which intends to bring in citizens to contribute to solutions. However, as far as I understand, this project has been initiated by the municipality, and it does thus not seem to clearly empower the students to take action on their own initiative, even if it might result in a stronger sense of agency.

When asked specifically if they address green consumerist solutions and/or the potential for collective action in their teaching, the teachers admitted that the focus tends to be on what the individual can do as a consumer, even though they are aware of potential problems with taking this approach. The physics and mathematics teachers said that the students get to calculate things like how much water is used when showering, and how much this can be

reduced, and the biology teacher mentioned that ecological footprints and how they can be reduced have been discussed with the class. However, this teacher also mentioned the fact that there are limits to what individuals can do to reduce their impact within current structures in society, and that this makes environmental issues political as well as personal. Yet, later on during the interview it became apparent that this did not mean that they had talked much in class about the possibility of taking action as citizens to influence these structures. The teachers explicitly stated that their teaching is generally more concerned with individual action in the form of green consumerism than with collective action. The biology teacher saw this as problematic, but also provided an explanation as to why this is the case:

> You put a lot of responsibility on the personal level, really, and you could discuss that more. […] we would like to cooperate a lot more with the social studies subject. I don't really have the competence in that area. Of course I could discuss where the responsibility lies, but if you would do that in a deeper way perhaps you should have a social studies teacher with you.

This teacher said that the school is planning to initiate such cooperations between subjects, but due to the fact that the school is newly established, this has not materialised yet. Later on during the interview, the same teacher explicitly addressed some of the myths about sustainable consumption outlined above, and contested them:

> I mean, can we change our consumption habits in the economic system that we have? It seems sort of impossible. If you try to buy less, someone else shouts that: "Oh, now the economy collapses! We need to increase our consumption!" You hear in news reports about the big environmental problems because of overconsumption, and then in the next report they say that: "Now the most important thing is to increase consumption in the US so that the wheels start spinning again." […] We can go on saving all the hot water we want; if there are others pushing for increased consumption it becomes a bit pointless. These things can be brought up a lot more if you have these collaborations between the subjects. For me as a biology teacher, it becomes more of personal reflections if I enter into that field, rather than my field of knowledge. You need to be able to illuminate it in a slightly more professional way.

The physics teacher expressed similar ideas:

> On the one hand, the individual can make a difference, but at the same time we are so dependent on what society does. Even if I want to take the bus or the train, that requires that there are connections, so everyone can't do that, no matter how much they want to. I can sometimes feel that that is a bit unfair when you measure your ecological footprints and find out that "If everyone lived like you we would need three Earths." So it's not the case that I can fix things myself so that it becomes one Earth; it takes a huge change in society, and that can sometimes feel a bit wrong, or unfair.

Furthermore, this teacher said that this conflict might occasionally be brought up with the students, but contended that it is not desirable to do this too much, since it might discourage them and make them lose hope. The biology teacher also said that it can be useful to talk about the possibility for action on the individual level to motivate some students who want to

see a clear effect of what they do for the environment, so perhaps this kind of action also has a role to play. The teacher concluded that it would be good to emphasise more clearly that there are different ways of working – both as individuals and as a collective.

When asked explicitly, the biology teacher agreed that it would be possible to achieve more in terms of solving environmental problems if we focused more on collective action and responsibility, rather than green consumerism. The physics teacher, however, did not seem to agree with this:

> I strongly believe in things that start with the individual. But of course it has to be governed by, for example, tax money and different targeted taxes and things like that. […] I really think you need instruments, but the central idea must be to start with the individual.

This teacher also said that it would be difficult to include discussions on the possibility of taking collective action in physics and mathematics, but that it might be possible to do it in some way. However, from the teacher's statements it seems as if the main reasons that such topics are not brought up a lot are that the teacher is wary of being perceived as biased by promoting the views of certain organisations, and that the teacher's personal belief in the role of the individual makes solutions at the individual level take pride of place. This teacher expressed a belief in the ability of consumers to influence what is available on the market, and when asked about the possibility of individuals uniting to work for change, mentioned consumer organisations that work to influence market actors.

To some extent, the possibility of taking action as a citizen against environmental problems was made apparent during the class' recent participation in the Conference of Youth (COY) in Warsaw, in conjunction with the 2013 United Nations Climate Change Conference, since the students met activists from all over the world there. However, the biology teacher believed that this way of working did not seem appealing to most of the students:

> I think that way of working felt, how should I put this... interesting or comfortable to a tiny few. I think many felt – I mean, it was things that they said then – that: "Ugh, this is so political," sort of, and: "We're no activists."

The teacher speculated that the students feel like this because they do not identify themselves with people who are heavily engaged in politics and social movements, since these people are considered to be a bit "nerdy", and the whole idea of engaging in this way therefore seems "rather foreign" to the students.

Based on the statements made by teachers and students about what kind of solutions to environmental problems that are brought up in class, it does seem as if the situation is rather more complex than what was originally assumed on the basis of the theoretical framework. By and large, the individualistic, green consumerist perspective does appear to be dominant, but the teachers obviously see through some of the myths about sustainable consumption, which is evident when they question the ability of the individual to achieve substantial change within current unsustainable structures in society. Nevertheless, the same myths seem to live on in their teaching to some extent through the emphasis on the importance of individual behaviour change, which could be seen as confirming myth number three: "If everyone does a little we will achieve a lot" (Mont et al. 2013, 47). The apparent belief in consumer activism is also consistent with Bauman's idea that responsibility is largely privatised, but the situation does, in this case, not seem to be as extreme as one might assume when reading Bauman. After all, the class did attend a conference bringing together activists to address climate change, and the teachers do bring up things like renewable energy in their teaching; potential solutions that – even if this is not explicitly stated – are more likely to be implemented by actors like governments and corporations than by individual consumers.

As previously mentioned, the teachers are aware of the structural hindrances to sustainable behaviour, and say that this occasionally shines through in their teaching. Nonetheless, they also explicitly state that the individualistic, green consumerist perspective is dominant, which was to be expected on the basis of the theoretical framework for this thesis. Some reasons for this dominance can be found in the desire to promote hope in students by telling them that small actions do make a difference, and in the lack of cooperation with social science subjects, where the possibility of civic engagement would be a more natural topic to bring up with the students. The cooperation between this school and Naturskyddsföreningen is intended to give the staff access to more knowledge and resources on sustainability, which could potentially increase the possibility of also including critical views on green consumerism in their teaching. On the other hand, Naturskyddsföreningen has stated that the aim of the cooperation is to "inspire lifestyle change and new consumption patterns" among the students (Nilsson 2012), which suggests that other perspectives on sustainability than green consumerism might not be prioritised in the project. However, this was not something that the teachers mentioned as a reason for them not to bring up such issues in their teaching. Neither did they mention the curriculum as something that had influenced which perspectives on solutions to environmental problems that were brought up. A look at the curriculum reveals

that it does state that upper secondary education should include discussions about environmental issues and make students able to contribute to solving them. However, it does not clearly specify whether the solutions mentioned should be individual, collective, or both (Skolverket 2011b). This seems to leave quite a lot of space for individual teachers to decide what to bring up.

4.2 How do Swedish upper secondary students primarily believe they can contribute to solving environmental problems: as consumers or as citizens?

When looking at the written answers to the questions "What do you think are the most important things you can do to contribute to solving environmental problems? Why?", the result is very clear: out of the 28 answers, 21 mention things that can be done to reduce the environmental impact of commuting and travelling, such as using public transport and cycling; 21 mention actions relating to waste management, such as recycling and avoiding littering; 17 mention decreasing consumption of different things, such as electricity, water and meat; 16 mention shifting consumption to products that are organic, eco-labeled or locally produced. These answers all express individualised solutions to environmental problems. Furthermore, 12 answers include statements of the type "Little things make a difference", which ties in with the third myth about sustainable consumption presented by Mont et al (2013, 47). All the 28 answers except one contain statements of the kinds described above. The one answer that does not, along with six others that do, mentions things of the type "Informing others about the problems". Generally, the point of this appears to be to inspire others to change their own habits, in line with the fifth myth about sustainable consumption: "More information leads to sustainable behaviour" (Mont et al. 2013, 61), so this kind of action does not contradict the inclination towards a privatisation of responsibility either. Two answers mention supporting organisations, one only financially, but the other also through personal engagement. Another answer states that it is possible to make proposals to the municipality. Only one answer openly contests the myths about sustainable consumption and the privatisation of responsibility:

> As a single individual you have very limited possibilities to really make a difference […] What can make a difference, however, is that everyone pressures those in power […] In some way, the most important thing you can do is then to get your fellow humans and others to understand the scientific factors behind this and make them aware that only as a joint unit can we crush the environmental crisis that capitalism and greed has put us in.

Thus, all in all there are three answers that bring up the possibility of engaging in politics or

organisations, but only one that clearly rejects the idea of a privatised responsibility. There were no obvious gender differences. It might be argued that the phrasing of the question could have invited answers of the green consumerist kind rather than such relating to civic action. However, if it is the case that the question tends to be interpreted in this way, that is in itself likely to be a result of current discourses advocating green consumerism rather than other ways of acting. The fact that one answer did express an opposing view and that two others also mentioned different kinds of civic action shows that it is possible to interpret the questions in other ways too.

When only looking at the written answers, the picture seems quite clear: most of these students appear to see themselves as able to contribute to solving environmental problems primarily in their role as consumers, rather than as citizens. However, things become more complex when also taking into account the material gathered during the interviews. When first talking about solutions, most students mentioned actions of the green consumerist kind when referring to what individuals can do, and no one specifically mentioned civic engagement. But when I explicitly asked them about their views on the possibility of getting engaged in organisations or in politics, their answers varied a great deal more. While some claimed to have very little knowledge about and interest in politics, others turned out to be very interested, and even members of a political party. Student A expressed an interest in working professionally with environmental issues in the future, and saw this as an important way of contributing to solving environmental problems. Student B emphasised the importance of voting with environmental problems in mind, and expressed a wish to eventually become active in politics: "I have always been interested in politics and things like that, so I'm thinking that perhaps, some time in the future, I can start something that can, sort of, help make a difference." This student's impression was that many young people are interested in environmental politics and care deeply about solving environmental problems. Student C, on the other hand, who is a member of a political party and engaged in environmental politics, did not think that young people in general are very interested in environmental politics, even if they are often engaged in other political issues.

All the students agreed that engaging in either organisations or politics could be effective ways of contributing to solving environmental problems, but some seemed to regard this kind of action more as a way to inspire and influence others to change their individual behaviour than as a way of influencing political policies:

Andrea: Do you think it's important that people do that kind of things, to engage politically or joining organisations and work to solve environmental problems in that way?

Student D: Yes, in the type of organisations that, sort of, urge people to change their habits, sure.

Even though all the interviewed students did see engagement in politics or organisations as a possible way of achieving positive change, some still thought that they themselves could do more as individuals. Just as the biology teacher speculated, some seemed to see political engagement as something foreign and distant, and even if they acknowledged the importance of it, they could not see themselves participating in it:

Andrea: Where do you think you can do the most as an individual, then? Is it if you change your own behaviour, or if you influence politicians?

Student E: I'm not a political person, so I would probably say that it would be good if you could try to change your own habits, because that's a good start. Then you can try to see if you can get others with you who might also understand that it's a good way of doing things. […]

Andrea: You said that you're not a political person. What do you mean by that?

Student E: […] I don't know, I sort of don't have any good experiences of what good politicians have done for society. No, I don't know. I'm just not interested.

Even student C, who is active in a political party, believed that green consumerism matters more than political engagement:

Student C: Myself, I don't believe that it helps so much if there is a big decision, but these little things, like reducing meat production [*sic*], that you do yourself, and things like that, probably work better than big political decisions.

Andrea: But you're still engaged?

Student C: But I'm still engaged politically too, so I still believe in that, even if it probably helps more, all these little things.

Later on, however, student C did express the belief of personally being able to have a bigger impact through politics than in personal life, since working politically allows you to reach out to others. Student B thought so too, after some hesitation, concluding that it is possible to make a bigger difference in politics in the long run, but that this requires a lot of time and energy to make people listen to what one has to say. Student D, on the other hand, did not seem to have much confidence in civic engagement:

Andrea: There are those who argue that you have a bigger chance to influence things and that there are, sort of, bigger possibilities of achieving more if you work against environmental problems in a context, sort of, as a collective, rather than as a single individual, when you are in the shop, or when you decide what electricity to buy, or things like that. What do you think about that?

Student D: I don't know. It's probably hard to get a big group to do the same thing. So I still don't see what they could do, I mean, what you could accomplish that would really make a big difference.

Some students agreed with the critics of green consumerism that there is too much focus in public debate on green consumerism. One of them was student B: "But then you think: 'What can you do more?', I mean, can't you cooperate with anyone? I don't understand what they're thinking when they want everyone to do it themselves. That doesn't work." Student F agreed that it would be possible to get further in solving environmental problems if we focused more on civic action:

> *Student F*: Yes, I'm sure it gets a lot better if you do that. […] It would help quite a lot. And at the same time you do the individual things that you do, because I think there are quite a lot of people who do these individual things, but there are not so many who do these collective things. So if you do that, that would make an addition, of course.
> *Andrea*: So that could be a good complement to the things people might already do, sort of?
> *Student F*: Yes, exactly. Because there are already X amount of people who do that – I mean, the little things.

Student C, however, did not consider this to be necessary:

> I still think that you don't need a lot of focus on what you should do together, because if you want to do something, you do it, sort of. It's better to focus on reaching out with what you can do as an individual to people who don't really care a whole lot, because then they will do it anyway. Because if you reach out with things you can do all together, then the people who don't care at all, they don't do those things. They do the things that you can do as an individual, but they don't do the things where you have to go out and do something collectively, big.

When asked who is responsible for solving environmental problems, the spontaneous answer from all but one of the interviewed students was that we are all responsible. Student A's immediate response, however, was that politicians are most responsible:

> I think politicians, in some way, because it's definitely not us, the generations that have come now, because we really haven't done anything to make the environment bad. We're just the ones who get to clean up.

When explicitly asked if some actors have more responsibility than others, some of the other students also agreed that those with more power, such as politicians, have more responsibility. Student D considered individuals and companies to be responsible: "Because I guess it's the individual that chooses to do something that harms the environment – that goes for companies as well, of course – and if you choose to do that I guess you also have the responsibility to try to reduce that effect yourself." When asked if (s)he does anything to contribute to solving environmental problems, student F claimed to try to do some things, but also said that there are limits: "You shouldn't change yourself in order to contribute to something in society. You shouldn't do anything on purpose just to worsen society either. I'm thinking that you should, sort of, just do what you can do."

In the interviews, all the students expressed the wish to see more people make lifestyle changes that would reduce their negative impact on the environment, and believed that this kind of change would contribute to solving environmental problems. Generally, it seems as if the interviewed students overestimate the potential gains from minor changes. Some seem to be thinking of changes that would be easy for most people to make if they only wanted to, and not about radical measures that would require drastic changes to people's way of life. But, as Mont et al (2013, 48, 50) show, small changes do not add up to large effects, and structural and social barriers often prevent people from making more substantial lifestyle changes (Isenhour 2010). Some students thought that it would be easier to get people to engage in actions of the green consumerist kind than in civic action, because adjusting your lifestyle is easier and less time consuming. However, if people would like to drastically reduce their negative impact on the environment through green consumerism, this would probably demand quite a lot of time and energy, since they would be working against social norms and structures that promote unsustainable behaviour (Ibid.). Some students realised some of the difficulties, for example student G, who acknowledged that it can be difficult to motivate people to change their lifestyles if they do not think other people make any efforts to do the same thing, and who also mentioned that it is today impossible to lead an entirely sustainable lifestyle in Sweden, since there are factors outside of individuals' control that affect their impact on the environment. Student G believed that future technical development would help solve these problems, but also argued that politicians have the power to set the agenda: "Some don't like being called environmental activists, but by being forced to do it it will still be like the norm, and then everyone will be able to better adapt to it." This is in line with the recommendations given by Mont et al (2013:10).

Just like in the written responses, the interviewed students seem to be heavily influenced by the third and fifth myths about sustainable consumption: "If everyone does a little we will achieve a lot" (Mont et al. 2013, 47) and "More information leads to sustainable behaviour" (Mont et al. 2013, 61), no matter whether they see civic engagement as an option for them or not. But the fact that some of them are engaged in politics or at least see this as something that they could engage in in the future speaks against Bauman's theory that people today only see themselves as consumers and not as citizens. At least some of these students clearly see themselves as citizens, and are willing to take action together with others to achieve common goals. However, it is clear that all students cannot see how politics are relevant to them

personally, and that in itself is problematic in a democratic society, where everyone should be able to participate in public life on equal terms. It thus seems as if there could be a need for highlighting the possibility of engaging as citizens, just as some of the interviewees suggested. The fact that all the students started out talking about individualistic solutions rather than collective ones also indicates that green consumerism could be closer to the students' everyday understanding of solutions to environmental problems, even if they are positive towards civic engagement when the topic is brought up. This is confirmed by the written responses collected from the students. Thus, the overall impression is that Bauman's theory of the privatisation of responsibility is still applicable, at least to some extent. These findings seem to be consistent with data from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2013, 138-9), which show that 26,3% of Swedish 16-19-year-olds had (during the previous year) or would consider buying products specifically for political, ethical or environmental reasons, while only 6,3% were or would consider becoming members of an organisation working with a specific societal issue, and the same number, 6,3%, were or would consider becoming members of a political party. Nevertheless, these data (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2013, 69, 109) also show that many 16-19-year-olds in Sweden think it is important for citizens to engage in politics, and about a third state being interested in politics. The sense of being able to influence political decisions is quite low, however (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2013, 121, 126), which indicates that more work might need to be done to open up political processes towards citizens in general, and young people in particular. It is not entirely clear whether the level of political engagement among young people has changed over time or not (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2013, 141-3).

4.3 How do Swedish upper secondary students feel about environmental problems, and how do these feelings relate to the kinds of solutions that they see as available?

Contrary to Bauman's theory, these students did not express feelings of guilt and shame in relation to environmental problems. They all agreed that they share the responsibility to deal with the problems with the rest of society, but this responsibility was not always seen as a burden, but rather as something that everyone just has to accept. One example is student G, who said that "it's a big responsibility, but it's shared by many. It's not as if I can do everything myself." Student B also felt personally responsible, but saw this responsibility as somewhat limited: "I feel that I have a certain responsibility to do some things, but I don't feel like I should, sort of, suddenly change everything on my own, because I'm still *nobody* compared to all the people out there." However, some said that feeling personally responsible

can in some ways be a burden:

> *Andrea*: Do you feel personally responsible in any way?
> *Student E*: Yes, a little, since I live a good enough life – I could change my habits, but I don't, because I'm too stubborn to stop eating meat, for example. […]
> *Andrea*: But when you feel like you have this personal responsibility, how does that feel? Does it feel heavy, or does it feel okay?
> *Student E*: Sometimes it feel heavy; when you think about other people's situation and that you, sort of, *should* do something. But at other times it's more, sort of, "I do what I can."

All the interviewed students seemed to be worried about environmental problems to some extent. One example is student A:

> It's not positive, in view of how far things have gone already, if you look at where things are going if we don't make big changes. So what you think about is perhaps future generations, how many more generations we will have if we keep doing what we do. That's what's perhaps a bit frightening, when it comes to all the natural resources and everything we use up.

Student E expressed a rather grim view of the future, but said that even though the situation is worrying, there are other things competing for attention:

> Sometimes it feels hard, when you think about all the things that can happen in the future and what kind of world I want to live in – if I want to live in a world that's full of exhaust gases where you can barely breathe, or whatever it's like, but then sometimes... I don't know, you just don't think about it, because you have so many other things in life you need to think about.

The students all had some hope that it will be possible to solve environmental problems, even if some said that they sometimes lose hope when they are confronted with the immensity of the problems:

> *Student C*: Sometimes you can feel hopeful about how things are going, but sometimes you just think: "This is going straight to hell."
> *Andrea*: What is it that affects, then, which you...?
> *Student C*: Well, it's if you hear something that's happening [*sic*]. If there is a big decision that: "Yes, we will keep using coal power," or... Then you get a bit: "Ouch, this will not go well," sort of. But then when you hear news that: "Oh, now we have come up with a good method," that still feels good.

Student G mentioned the insight that it is not possible to individually reduce one's own ecological footprint to a sustainable level as something that made it harder to feel hopeful. Student D seemed to be hopeful for the most part: "Well, first of all it doesn't help feeling down about it, and then I think that this is, sort of, really in everyone's interest, so sooner or later – preferably sooner – we will probably solve it."

Regarding feelings of anger about environmental problems, the answers varied a great deal.

Some, like students C and D, stated not being angry at all, while others where clearly angry about the general situation, or at specific actors. Student E stated sometimes being angry, but also said that it can be difficult to know where to direct the anger:

> Sometimes, but then I'm probably just as angry at myself as I am at the rest of the surrounding world. We do too little, but really, I don't know how we should do it! So in that way there is nothing that I can direct my anger towards. I don't have anything that makes me able to reduce the anger […]

Students A and B expressed anger over the fact that politicians have not been able to solve environmental problems on the global level, despite years of negotiations. When asked if being angry at Swedish politicians too, student B said that Sweden has done quite a lot, but should do more:

> But I can be angry at the politicians because they don't take it further. I mean, perhaps they did this a few years ago and everyone thought it was good […], but they should try to develop it even more. You can't stay in the same place […]. Now they should be thinking: "Okay, yes, but we did this a few years ago. Now we should be thinking of more things that can help the environment even more." I really think they should start thinking about that. You get angry at them not doing that, that they're trying to, sort of, avoid it, almost.

Student F was angry at factories for destroying forests:

> *Student F*: And I'm thinking that they might not really understand how important forests are to us […] until everything is gone. […] They have to, sort of, understand the principle – how serious things are. […]
> *Andrea*: Can you feel angry at politicians too, or...?
> *Student F*: I don't know, I'm not a very political person, but... If they spread a lot of lies that's not the right thing to do.

Regarding the feelings expressed by these interviewees, it does not seem as if Bauman's theory holds entirely in this context. The students do not seem to blame themselves heavily for failing to solve environmental problems, even if they do see themselves as having some responsibility to contribute. One reason for this might be that their young age prevents them from taking full responsibility for their lifestyles; your action space as a consumer is clearly limited when you are not in control of the household budget and do not have the final say in important decisions in the family. However, the fact that some of the students do experience the responsibility as a burden indicates that the privatisation of responsibility does affect them too, since it would also have been possible to blame external structures for having difficulties changing one's own behaviour. On the other hand, some also blame politicians for failing to deal with the problems, which shows that consumers are not seen as the only actors who should take responsibility for solving environmental problems.

It is not possible to tell if the students suffer from eco-anxiety based on these interviews. Even if they are all at least somewhat worried about environmental problems, they also share some sense of hope that society will be able to solve the problems, and the worry does therefore not seem to be overwhelming or debilitating. However, it is possible that such strong anxieties would not be revealed in interviews like these, in conversation with someone they do not know well. Data from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2013, 234) show that 14,8% of Swedish 16-19-year-olds are often worried about the global environmental situation. There is no data to show how many regard their worries as overwhelming or debilitating, and it is therefore not possible to draw any conclusions about how widespread eco-anxiety is in Sweden. Nonetheless, the fact that the majority is not often worried indicates that it is not as widespread as could have been assumed based on the literature reviewed in this thesis. However, another possible explanation could be that young people might put their worries aside in everyday life to be able to cope, and therefore state that they are not *often* worried, even though they might admit to having strong worries when specifically asked in an interview.

Furthermore, it is not possible to see any straightforward connection between anger over environmental problems and the tendency to take civic action among these interviewees. For example, student C, who is an active member of a political party, stated not being angry about environmental problems, while other students who do say that they are angry are not engaged in politics or environmental organisations. What can be said, however, is that some students express a sense of frustration that they do not seem to be able to direct anywhere. Student G said that it is easier to get angry when it is clear who causes the problem: "I mean, it's different if you notice that someone is doing something really bad – then you see it in a different way than if someone is just riding a car." It could be argued that there are usually certain actors "doing something really bad" that causes environmental problems, even if, in many cases, it is not possible to immediately discern who they are. Giving greater emphasis to revealing such hidden structures could perhaps enable students (and people in general) to target their anger in an appropriate direction and put it to use as a motivator for action.

5. Conclusion

The results of this case study indicate that the teaching in this class is dominated by a green consumerist perspective on solutions to environmental problems, and that the students mainly think themselves able to contribute to solving environmental problems in their role as

consumers, rather than as citizens. However, neither the teaching nor the students' beliefs seem to be as unequivocally dominated by green consumerism, myths about sustainable consumption, and the privatisation of responsibility as I assumed in the hypothesis. The teachers are aware of the limitations of green consumerism, and some students do see civic engagement as an option, even if actions of the green consumerist type tended to be the first to spring to mind when they were asked how they could contribute to solving environmental problems. When it comes to the students' emotions towards environmental problems, the results are somewhat ambiguous. Even though the students do see themselves as having some responsibility to contribute to solving environmental problems, they do not seem to feel particularly guilty about not doing enough. There is both worry and hope; while some students feel angry, others do not, and there were no clear connections between anger and the tendency or will to engage as citizens. Some students did seem to have trouble knowing where to direct their anger and frustration, however, and this in itself points towards a potential need for highlighting the possibility of civic engagement, with the possibility of transforming anger into action, in schools.

Coming back to what was said in the introduction: there appears to be wide agreement in the research community that, in order to be a part of the solution to the multiple challenges ahead, education for sustainable development needs to be pluralistic, democratic and promote critical thinking (Gustafsson and Warner 2008; Huckle 2010; Jickling and Wals 2008; Sandell et al. 2003; Öhman 2008, 20-21). If education is to live up to these ideals, it is essential that it also acknowledges the problems inherent in green consumerism and the privatisation of responsibility and brings them up for discussion, or else students will not have been given the opportunity to critically evaluate the full range of potential paths towards sustainability. The challenge is to do this in such a way that students are not deprived of all hope of being able to contribute to solving the problems. This could be done by emphasising the possibility of civic action instead, stressing that this is not a kind of activity that only people with certain political beliefs can and should engage in, but something in which all citizens can participate. Van Poeck and Vandenabeele (2012, 547) claim that, even though there is agreement that education for sustainable development should address different perspectives, this is often not fully implemented in practice, as conflicting views on the sustainability concept are not brought to light. They are critical towards the idea that education should teach students to act in a certain way as citizens, but instead argue that it needs to put democracy and participation into practice, "acknowledging the plurality of voices and the controversy surrounding many

sustainability issues without resorting to an 'anything goes' relativism." (Van Poeck and Vandenabeele 2012, 548). Furthermore, they say that education should "address, explore and articulate tensions between, on the one hand, a plurality of views, values and knowledge claims concerning the issues at stake and, on the other hand, the sense of urgency brought about by their far-reaching effects" (Van Poeck and Vandenabeele 2012, 548). These are essential points to have in mind when thinking about how to improve educational practices if we want citizens who are able to critically reflect upon and deal with complex problems, going beyond the limitations inherent in current structures.

The point I want to make is not that schools should stop talking about individuals' responsibility for their own lifestyle choices altogether, but rather that they should broaden the discussion to include other ways of working against environmental problems too, as well as acknowledge the structural and social barriers against sustainable behaviour and what can be done about them. Or, as Jensen (2002, 332) puts it: since environmental problems are caused both by structures and individuals, "schools have a responsibility to help equip the members of society in their charge, their students, with the knowledge and commitment to take personally meaningful decisions and action to address the challenges posed by both lifestyle and societal conditions." Given the limited possibilities of the green consumerist approach to solve the immense and urgent environmental problems we are facing, as explained in section 3.1 above, acknowledging the possibilities of other kinds of action is clearly an important task for the educational system. What Ellis (2004, 100) says about human rights education applies equally well here: "Mobilising action among young people as a group is essential if we are to ensure a political consciousness in the service of positive social change in the future." One way of facilitating a development in this direction in schools could be, as suggested by one of the teachers in this study, to establish closer cooperations between natural and social science subjects. However, schools are not isolated from the rest of society, and it therefore seems likely that substantial changes in teaching practices will only come about when general discourses in society change.

As stated in section 2.1, the case study design does not allow us to draw conclusions directly from this study to Swedish upper secondary classes in general. However, the results do show that the theoretical framework employed in this thesis can be used to understand how solutions to environmental problems are framed in Swedish upper secondary schools. There is little reason to believe that the class under study here would be exceptional in its inclination

towards green consumerist solutions to environmental problems. Nya Malmö Latin has a far-reaching cooperation with Naturskyddsföreningen, which means that the school has access to a lot of knowledge about environmental issues, and thus it is not up to individual teachers to try to integrate environmental issues at their own discretion. The conditions for providing a balanced view of possible solutions to environmental problems might therefore be more favourable here than in most other schools in Sweden. On the other hand, green consumerist approaches seem to be prioritised in the cooperation project (Nilsson 2012). Nevertheless, I would argue that it is more likely that the bias in favour of individual, consumerist solutions to environmental problems is a result of a general tendency in society, than of any particular conditions in this class. That said, it is of course possible that there are teachers out there who present other perspectives in their teaching on their own accord. After all, the curriculum does seem to leave quite a lot of space for teachers to shape their own teaching in this regard. In order to find out if one perspective or the other dominates, it would be necessary to conduct a large-scale survey. Generally speaking, it would be interesting to see more research in the field of education for sustainable development work with the theories used in this thesis in the future, as concepts such as green consumerism, civic action and the privatisation of responsibility do not seem to have been widely adopted in this field of study up until now.

Appendix A: Interview guide – teachers

Stort tack för att du ställde upp på en intervju. Det kommer att vara till stor hjälp för mig i mitt uppsatsskrivande. Jag heter alltså Andrea och jag läser masterprogrammet i humanekologi vid Lunds universitet. Man kan säga att det är ett ämne som behandlar kopplingarna mellan människor, samhället och miljön. Den här uppsatsen är mitt examensarbete.

Är det okej för dig att jag spelar in intervjun?
Det är bara jag som kommer att lyssna på inspelningen, men dina svar kan komma att citeras i uppsatsen, och därmed läsas av andra.
Jag kommer inte att uppge ditt namn någonstans i uppsatsen, men däremot vilken skola du arbetar på och vilka ämnen du undervisar i i den här klassen, är det okej?

Eftersom den här uppsatsen är en fallstudie av den här klassen så är det bra om du i dina svar tänker på vad som gäller just den här klassen, snarare än din undervisning generellt.

Har du några frågor innan vi börjar?

- Till att börja med, vilket ämne är det du undervisar i?

- Jag har förstått att du brukar ta upp miljöfrågor i din undervisning. Kan du berätta mer om det?
  - Vilka miljöfrågor har du tagit/tar du upp med den här klassen?
  - Hur har du tänkt när du har valt att behandla just de här frågorna?

- När du tar upp miljöproblem med den här klassen, tar du också upp möjliga sätt att lösa dem då?
  - Om inte, varför?
  - Hur väljer du vilka lösningar som du ska ta upp med klassen?
  - Kan du ge exempel på lösningar som du har tagit/tar upp med den här klassen?
    - Varför har du valt att ta upp just de här lösningarna?
    - Fler exempel?
  - Det finns många olika sätt att kategorisera möjliga lösningar på miljöproblem. Ett sätt är till exempel att dela in dem dels i saker som vi kan göra själva som individer, och dels sådant som vi gör tillsammans med andra. Är det något som du har funderat kring i din undervisning?
    - Hur har du tänkt?
    - Tar du upp båda typerna av lösningar? Hur har du tänkt när du har valt att göra så?
  - Individuella lösningar är ofta fokuserade på att vi ska ändra eller minska vår egen, privata konsumtion på olika sätt. Det kan till exempel gälla vilken mat vi köper, hur vi transporterar oss, vår el- eller vattenanvändning. Är det något som du brukar ta upp i din undervisning?
    - Hur har du tänkt då?
  - Vi kan ju också arbeta för att minska miljöproblem genom att samarbeta med andra, till exempel politiskt eller inom olika organisationer. Är det något som du brukar ta upp i din undervisning?
    - Hur har du tänkt då?

- – Vissa menar att det i samhället är för stort fokus på vad vi kan göra som individer, och att det pratas för lite om vad vi kan göra genom att arbeta tillsammans med andra. Hur tänker du kring det?
  - ➢ Är det något du har reflekterat över i din undervisning? Hur har du tänkt?
- – En del menar att vi skulle kunna uppnå mycket mer om vi fokuserade på kollektivt engagemang och ansvar istället för individuellt agerande. Hur tänker du kring det?
  - ➢ Är det något du har reflekterat över i din undervisning? Hur har du tänkt?

- • Hur tror du att eleverna (i den här klassen) känner sig när de tänker på miljöproblem?
  - – Hur tror du att de typer av lösningar som diskuteras påverkar eleverna känslomässigt?
    - ➢ Tror du att betonande av olika typer av lösningar kan ge olika känslomässiga reaktioner? Till exempel: ångest, ilska, skuldkänslor, hopplöshet, etc. Hur tror du i så fall att de hänger ihop?

Nu har jag ställt de frågor jag ville ställa.
Är det något du vill tillägga?

Tack återigen för att du ville bli intervjuad. Uppsatsen kommer förhoppningsvis att vara klar i mitten av maj, men examinationen sker inte förrän i början av juni. Jag delar gärna med mig av resultaten och om ni vill kan jag komma till skolan och diskutera dem med er. Jag hoppas att uppsatsen kan vara användbar för er också.

Har du några andra frågor eller funderingar?

Appendix B: Interview guide – students

Stort tack för att du ställde upp på en intervju. Det kommer att vara till stor hjälp för mig i mitt uppsatsskrivande. Jag heter alltså Andrea och jag läser masterprogrammet i humanekologi vid Lunds universitet. Man kan säga att det är ett ämne som behandlar kopplingarna mellan människor, samhället och miljön. Den här uppsatsen är mitt examensarbete. Jag arbetar helt självständigt med uppsatsen, så skolan eller dina lärare är alltså inte med och påverkar vilka frågor jag ställer, och de kommer inte heller att få ta del av dina svar utöver att de kan läsa uppsatsen när den är klar.

Är det okej för dig att jag spelar in intervjun?
Det är bara jag som kommer att lyssna på inspelningen, men dina svar kan komma att citeras i uppsatsen, och därmed läsas av andra.
Jag kommer inte att uppge ditt namn någonstans i uppsatsen, men däremot vilken skola och årskurs du går i och möjligen vilket kön du har, är det okej?

När du svarar så vill jag att du tänker på att det inte finns några svar som är rätt eller fel. Jag är bara intresserad av att få veta hur det verkligen ser ut, och hur du tänker och känner. Du kommer inte att bli bedömd på något sätt beroende på hur eller vad du svarar. Om det ändå är någon fråga som du inte vill svara på så är det naturligtvis helt okej att avstå från att svara, eftersom den här intervjun är helt frivillig.

Har du några frågor innan vi börjar med själva intervjun?

- Då kanske du kan börja med att säga vilken skola, årskurs och program du går på och vilket kön du har så att det kommer med på inspelningen?

- Jag har förstått att ni har tagit upp miljöproblem i din klass. Kan du berätta lite om det?
  - I vilka ämnen har ni tagit upp miljöproblem?
  - Vad har ni pratat om då?

- När ni har pratat om miljöproblem, har ni också tagit upp möjliga sätt att lösa dem på?
  - Vilka lösningar har ni pratat om då?
  - Det finns många olika sätt att kategorisera möjliga lösningar på miljöproblem. Ett sätt är till exempel att dela in dem dels i saker som vi kan göra själva som individer, och dels i sådant som vi kan göra tillsammans med andra. Är det något som du har funderat kring?
    - Vilken sorts lösningar på miljöproblem tror du kan bidra mest till att lösa problemen? Hur tänker du då?
  - Individuella lösningar är ofta fokuserade på att vi ska ändra eller minska vår egen, privata konsumtion på olika sätt. Det kan till exempel gälla vilken mat vi köper, hur vi transporterar oss, vår el- eller vattenanvändning. Hur tänker du kring den typen av lösningar?
    - Är det viktigt att folk gör sådant? Varför/varför inte?
  - Vi kan ju också arbeta för att minska miljöproblem genom att samarbeta med andra, till exempel politiskt eller inom olika organisationer. Hur tänker du kring den typen av lösningar?
    - Är det viktigt att folk gör sådant? Varför/varför inte?

- Vilket av de här sätten som vi just har pratat om tror du är viktigast för att lösa miljöproblem?
- Vem eller vilka tycker du har störst ansvar för att lösa miljöproblem?
  - Politiker/överstatliga organisationer (t ex FN, EU)/företag/organisationer/individer?
- Hur tror du att du själv skulle ha störst möjlighet att påverka? Politiskt eller som konsument?
  - Gör du något själv för att bidra till att lösa miljöproblem? Kom ihåg att det inte finns några svar som är rätt eller fel.
  - Gör du något ensam, som individ/konsument? Varför/varför inte?
  - Engagerar du dig gemensamt med andra på något sätt? Inom en organisation/politiskt? Varför/varför inte?
- Vissa menar att det i samhället är för stort fokus på vad vi kan göra som individer, och att det pratas för lite om vad vi kan göra genom att arbeta tillsammans med andra. Hur tänker du kring det?
- En del menar att vi skulle kunna uppnå mycket mer om vi fokuserade på kollektivt engagemang och ansvar istället för individuellt agerande. Hur tänker du kring det?

- Hur känner du dig när du tänker på miljöproblem?
  - Känns det inget speciellt/känns det bra/känns det jobbigt?
    - Är du orolig? Varför/varför inte?
  - Hur känner du dig när du tänker på möjliga sätt att lösa miljöproblem?
    - Känner du ett personligt ansvar? Varför/varför inte?
    - Känner du hopp/oro/ångest/ilska?

- Skulle du säga att du är intresserad av miljöfrågor?
  - Påverkade det ditt val av skola/program/kurs? Hur?

Nu har jag ställt de frågor jag ville ställa.
Är det något du vill tillägga?

Hur tycker du att intervjun har varit?

Tack återigen för att du ville bli intervjuad. Uppsatsen kommer förhoppningsvis att vara klar i mitten av maj, men examinationen sker inte förrän i början av juni. Jag delar gärna med mig av resultaten och om ni vill kan jag komma till skolan och diskutera dem med er. Jag hoppas att uppsatsen kan vara användbar för er också. Det kanske är enklast om jag skickar den färdiga uppsatsen till era lärare, så kan de skicka den vidare till er om ni är intresserade av att läsa den.

Är det något annat som du undrar över?

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