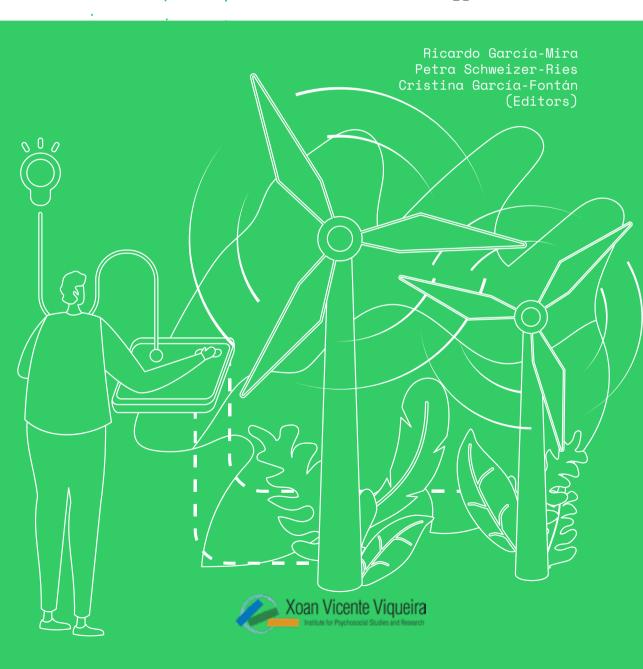
SUSTAINABILITY AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION IN THE POST-COVID ERA

Challenges and Opportunities in the Face of Climate Change and Energy Transition



172

10 / MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION. ADVANCES FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT

The present study focusses on the social and psychological dimensions that interplay in people's patterns of consumption, studying the different human motivations, aspirations and desires underlying conscious and responsible consumption behaviour at both individual and collective levels. Following a qualitative approach, a multi-method design was used, which combined participatory observation, document analysis and twenty-six in-depth interviews with participants in eight local food consumption initiatives located in the Galician region (Spain). In terms of motivations for organic food intake, the findings of this study show strong linkages between health concern and environmental awareness and place attachment, while the desire to perform a more healthu and sustainable consumption has strong influence on the decision to join a local food coop. The results show also three principal motivations underlying people's willingness to engage in collective forms of consumption (e.g. being a member of a food coop), which related first to the accessibility and affordability to organic, low-carbon and fair-trade groceries provided by the food coops; socio-political goals and transformative ambitions shared by these organizations; and, third, the individual aspiration to satisfying social and psychological needs such as the need for connectedness to like-minded people or a desire for autonomy and increase their control over their purchasing decisions, becoming independent of global corporations and supermarkets.

Keywords: Sutainable consumption; Motivations; Organizations; Psychological needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change adaptation and mitigation requires the coordinated action of institutions and citizens, who must develop profound transitions towards lowcarbon societies, which should turn into a dramatic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in domains such as transportation, energy use or the global food system. Nevertheless, despite the urgency to face these socio-environmental challenges and the evident public awareness about global warming, such concern does not translate into daily life actions, for instance, by reducing CO2 emissions at the individual collective level. It is well-known that energyrelated individual behaviours are affected by a diversity of sociocultural and psychological factors (Craig et al., 2019; Lacroix et al., 2019; Clayton et al., 2016; Gifford, 2011; Gifford et al., 2011). Further, geophysical and structural conditions, as well as the institutional, normative and political contexts may also enhance or inhibit energy transitions or sustainable social innovations leaded by both citizens and organizations [Lema-Blanco & Dumitru, 2019; García Mira & Dumitru, 2014], shaping also public acceptability of energy-relevant innovations and their successful replication across contexts (Dumitru, Lema-Blanco et al., 2022; Sánchez Maroño et al., 2022).

In an extensive review of the personal and social factors influencing or explaining pro-environmental behaviour (or lack-of), Gifford and Nilsson (2014) point out that the effective performance of a specific behaviour is influenced by attitudes, personal values and beliefs, individual capacities, well-established habits, as well as the sociocultural context in which each concrete behaviour is developed. In terms of climate-friendly behaviours, the limited cognition about the problem, personal worldviews and political orientations, identity, lack of trust in institutions or perceived risks of change have been found in numerous empirical studies as the main psychological barriers that inhibit individual and collective climate action. For example, the lack of knowledge or misunderstanding about what specific behaviours are most effective, or sceptical and passive attitudes about the competence or the actual capacity that individuals must articulate responses to the global warming crisis, are significant barriers to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Due to climate change is a global and complex problem, which involves numerous people or entities, many people can resonate that, as single individuals, they have little ability to influence or control the solution of the problem, holding, consequently, a passive or inactive behaviour. However, if individuals perceive that their action is important and have the capacity to provoke the desired change, the feeling of efficacy increases, which reaffirms the performance of the socially desired behaviour. Self-efficacy is considered a key aspect of a person's sense of competence and agency, and a powerful sense of self-efficacy is related to the adoption of green lifestyles (García Mira & Dumitru, 2017).

MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

Grounding on the need to increase understanding about the different motivations and factors underlying people's patterns of consumption, the aim of this article is to show light on the diversity of social and psychological dimensions influencing sustainable and conscious consumption in the food domain, as well as to have greater knowledge about the reasons underlying people's engagement in grassroots innovations and collective and cooperative consumption alternative at the local sphere.

2. FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION

Consumption becomes a central aspect of people's lifestyles. It concerns not only the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g., food or housing), but also psychological and social needs. Goods play vital symbolic roles in people's lives, and are used as instruments to communicate, for example, their status or identity. According to the scientific literature, people's values, worldviews, personal norms, or the perception of self-efficacy are psychological factors that strongly influence people's choices and behaviours. Furthermore, consumption decisions are deeply embedded in social and organizational contexts, for example social groups, as well as urban and rural settings. For instance, structural and technological constraints, the lack of accessibility or existing social norms and local cultures, appear to inhibit or influence sustainable behaviour in several domains like food intake, energy use or transportation (Lema-Blanco & Dumitru, 2019; Piligrimienė et al., 2020).

Food choices have great significance in terms of mitigating climate change. According to recent IPCC reports, extensive meat production accounts for 18% of global GHG emissions, an impact that is increased by emissions derived from its transportation and distribution. However, recent studies (Vermeir et al., 2020; Gifford & Chen, 2020) reported a notable gap between people's positive attitudes towards sustainable and organic food and their dietary routines. Eating habits are notoriously difficult to change, as they are deeply culturally and structurally embedded and influenced by a wide range of social, cognitive, socioeconomic, and contextual factors. For this reason, it is essential to increase the understanding of the factors and the individual and collective dynamics that influence society's lifestyles and, in specific, sustainable and conscious consumption choices.

Following, a literature review of the main factors and variables influencing food consumption behaviour will be presented. First, socio-demographic variables, individual's values and environmental awareness, habits, routines, social norms and identity appear as the factors commonly associated to consumption behaviour. Second, a series of specific conditions and features influence people's food intake, such as product-specific attitudes, health-orientation, the perceived

availability, or affordability and willingness to pay. A third line of research explored intrinsic motivations and aspirations underlying not only consumers' sustainable consumption, but people's willingness to engage in new social movements and grassroots innovations in the food domain.

2.1. Factors conditioning sustainable consumption behaviour related to food choices

As studied in different regions and cultures, buying decisions of organic products seem to be strongly influenced by sociodemographic variables, including educational level, gender, age, and the consumer's level of income. Concerning education, most studies have found a positive relationship between educational level and ecological consumer behaviour. For example, people with university levels usually present greater preferences for organic food, electric/hybrid vehicles. In terms of gender and age, women are more likely to buy organic products (Bryla, 2016) or adopt energy-saving behaviours in households (Thøgersen & Grønhøj, 2010). In Spain, organic products are often consumed by youngers, motivated by health reasons, as organic food is perceived as healthier, higher quality and nutritional properties and better taste (MAPAMA, 2017). Millennials are the main buyers of organic food in the United States (Organic Trade Association, 2017). In terms of level of income, many studies showed that the price and the affordability of organic products in the market strongly influence consumers' decisions. However, research found that sociodemographic variables play just a secondary role in consumer decisions and other social and psychological dimensions should be considered.

The role of individual factors has been also researched in the field of green consumption, focusing on the influence of values and beliefs, personal capacities, skills and competences. Empirical research has shown that people who reveal altruistic or prosocial values are more likely to maintain a more responsible behaviour with the environment (Craig et al., 2019; García Mira & Dumitru, 2014). Few studies have found that vegetarianism can be positively related to altruistic values and negatively to traditional values [Dietz et al., 1995], while biospheric values underly the purchase of organic food or ethical and fair-trade products (Vermeir et al., 2010; Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002).

Consumers' behaviours and attitudes are positively influenced by environmental knowledge and awareness. The information that a person receives on environmental issues and the understanding of the effects of their behaviour on the environment favours the acquisition of organic products. Then, a few studies suggest that people's environmental concern becomes a significant factor in predicting the purchase of organic products (Kostadinova, 2016). However, several authors have criticized the tendency in literature to overestimate the influence of attitudes, values or beliefs on consumption. They suggest that

MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

the percentage of consumers who consume organic for strictly environmental reasons is limited, and other of a social or emotional reasons come into play (Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002).

Research has also shown that habits and routines play a key role in people's daily choices and contribute to the maintenance of consumption patterns over time, being identified as one of the most important obstacles to mitigating climate change. For example, eating habits are extremely resistant to permanent change, since they are a central aspect of people's lifestyle, which may imply the confrontation with very internalized values and routines (Maio et al., 2007). If the cost of adopting a new behaviour is higher than the benefits, there will be resistance to change, due to modifying habits and routines always involves a series of costs. This is one of the reasons explaining that specific climate-relevant behaviours become extremely resistant to permanent changes. In concrete, energy use, food intake (especially meat) or motorized transportation by private car.

Furthermore, people attribute a series of symbolic or affective connotations to certain material goods (such as the car) that can be motivations even more influential than the more instrumental or practical functions of the concrete goods. Several studies have examined whether the identity could be related to food intake (Cook et al., 2002; Jastran et al, 2009). These studies suggest that the concept of identity may have additional explanatory value beyond constructs such as attitudes. Thus, people develop their food identities based, for example, on the eating habits acquired in childhood, on personal characteristics and by comparing their eating patterns with relevant reference groups. There is also evidence that suggest that vegetarianism, as well as meat consumption, are closely related to people's self-concept or identity (Jastran et al, 2009).

Literature suggests that social norms have a powerful effect not only on food choices but even in terms of quantities consumed, especially in social or public situations (Cruwys et al., 2015; Higgs, 2015). However, on contrary, Chekima et al. (2019a) found that social norms are not a non-significant predictor of organic food intake. It could be explained by the fact that the purchase of organic products becomes a relatively new practice still adopted by a minority of people, depending on geographical conditions and local cultures in which the studied population is embedded. In consequence there are still no subjective norms in many countries or regions that support or prescribe a decision to consume organic food. Then, if the "green social norm" does not exist or is still not strong enough, consumers will experience little or no discomfort at the dissonance between their attitudes and behaviour. In other words, consumers would not feel pressure from those they consider important to purchase sustainable options because this practice is not widely extended and does not constitute a social norm to be followed to obtain other's approval (Checkima et al., 2019a).

2.2. Specific factors affecting food choices

Recent studies point to the influence of product-specific attitudes towards organic food. This product-specific attitude is defined as a predisposition to respond favourably or not to a product consistently. Thus, although the maintenance of a favourable attitude or disposition towards the performance of a behaviour is an essential prerequisite, in the context of the purchase intention of organic food the influence of attitudes is inconclusive, as a weak or little significant has been reported (Moser, 2015, 2016; Rodríguez-Barreiro, et al., 2013). The positive attitude towards sustainable products appears to be affected d by other relevant variables such as the perception of the quality of the specific product (e.g., pesticide-free, more nutritious, healthy, safety).

Health orientation is defined as an individual's motivation to maintain healthy beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Kushwah et al., 2019). Consequently, the health orientation is known as the awareness and inclination of an individual to move towards good health regarding lifestyle and diet. There is extensive empirical evidence showing that health concerns are particularly relevant drivers for organic food consumption (Vermeir et al., 2020) or lower meat consumption (Malek et al., 2019). Recent studies conducted in Spain (Tomé et al., 2019; MAPAMA, 2017) also point out that the main motivation for the consumption of organic foods relates to health-orientation factors. Organic groceries are perceived as healthier, as they are not exposed to harmful chemicals, they are free of GMOs, as well as have higher quality and flavour of the product.

Research also found that sensory appeal and functionality characteristics are influential factors for buying organic products and foods. A relevant number of people places a high value on the "hedonistic benefits" like sensory characteristics that stimulate a deeper association with the product. For example, a study conducted by Chemika et al. (2017) found that consumers of organic products reported a strong influence of sensory attractiveness and people are stimulated by the sensory characteristics, which means "a consequence of the functional and psychological benefits provided by the product and exerts its effect on the choice of food through the negotiation of values by the consumer" (ibid, p. 1445). Thus, although the predominant approach in organic products marketing strategies stresses the health or environmental benefits, an emphasis on the hedonic aspects (e.g., taste) of these foods could be a more effective approach.

The perception of availability of organic goods can become a strong determining factor for people to make a conscious and responsible consumption. The perceived availability is positively associated with the consumption of organic food. However, this could also function as a barrier if these products are not easily visible in supermarkets. The empirical evidence reveals, also, that organic products are usually perceived as more expensive than conventional ones, representing a higher cost than most consumers would not be willing to pay. Even

177

MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

though people manifest a high environmental awareness and pro-environmental attitudes, price is still one of the most important barriers to purchase organic products, arguing that their higher prices make them unaffordable (Checkima et al., 2017, 2019). Nonetheless, other studies suggest that a higher price can increase the perception of the value of the product, since higher prices can indicate a higher acceptable quality and reliability (Gottschalk & Leistner, 2013). The willingness to pay a premium for organic food becomes critical and depends on the balance that the consumer makes between the added benefits (e.g., on health) that this product brings and its cost (Checkima et al., 2017).

2.3. Intrinsic motivations and social and political aspiration underlying ethical and conscious consumption

Intrinsic and transcendent motivations, as well as hedonic aspirations, can positively influence the consumption of sustainable food. Some studies on local organic agri-food networks present evidence that conscious consumers are guided by altruistic motivations, social values, attachment to the territory or the search for more supportive, ethical, and sustainable production foodsystems (Zoll et al., 2018; Seyfang, 2006, 2007). Recent studies on grassroots food initiatives show that perceived high-quality of organic food, environmental concern, and the desire to strengthen the local economy represent the main motivations for people to purchase organic, "kilometre zero" food or Slow Food products (Vita et al., 2020; Zoll et al., 2018; Papaoikonomou, 2013). Community activities related to food can stimulate the satisfaction of intrinsic motivations, such as the aspiration to be more autonomous in accessing food products and less dependent on external actors. For example, in a study on the Slow Food movement, Dumitru, Lema-Blanco et al. (2016 a, b) found that the opportunity to connect with other like-minded people means the main attraction for many activists, since interaction with other people reinforces their sense of connection, experience of happiness and self-esteem, which represents a psychological reward for participating in these initiatives.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Contextualization of the study

The study is contextualized in the Galician region, located in the Northwest of Spain. Galician culture revolves around local gastronomy, strongly rooted on high-quality locally produced meat, fresh seafood and vegetables. Although local markets are still alive, buying practices in youngest and families are often performed in supermarkets, while mostly minority groups and senior population choose organic and small shops for shopping their groceries and other goods. Like other regions in Spain, alternative agri-food movements became popular since the 2000s, coincident with the emergence of the anti-globalization

movement, whose activists seek to link the global struggle with their daily practices. Galician food movement is organized around the Conscious and Responsible Consumption Network. This informal network is formed by twenty-five collective food buying groups and consumer cooperatives engages a total of 1.500 families across the region, which jointly organize their food purchases by establishing agreements with farmers and local producers, with whom they organize regular deliveries of seasonal products (see Lema-Blanco et al., 2015, for a description of the Galician transformative movements).





Pictures. Árbore organic food shop (left). Zocamiñoca's shop (right).

3.2. Research objectives, methods and sample description

The study adopted a qualitative-interpretative approach (Flick, 2014; Taylor & Bodgan, 2010) to conduct and holistic and inductive-based research on the complex and dynamic phenomena of the Conscious and Responsible Consumption Network. A multi-method design was used combining participatory observation, document analysis and twenty-six in-depth interviews with participants in eight local food coops located in the Galician region (Spain). The topics covered in the empirical study revolved around the motivations for conscious consumption, activist's consumption styles and participatory and learning practices fostered by these food initiatives. For the purposes of this paper, the motivations and expectations underlying people's consumption decision are explored, with a specific focus on those determining engagement in food alternatives such as organic consumer's cooperatives (see Lema-Blanco, 2022, for a full description of the study).

The empirical design was structured in four phases. Phase I consisted of a documentary review of the Galician food initiatives. Phase II consisted of participant observation that extended throughout the entire empirical phase of the study. Phase III consisted of exploratory interviews with a sample of fourteen activists of three local initiatives located in the cities of Vigo (Árbore, Aldea) and A Coruña (Zocamiñoca). In phase IV, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and former members of seven different entities and informal initiatives (A Gradicela, Agrelar, Árbore, Millo Miúdo, Panxea, Semente and Zocamiñoca). A total of twenty-six participants were interviewed in the study.

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Figure 1, below, illustrates the distribution of the sample in terms of the food initiative they belong or belonged in the past.

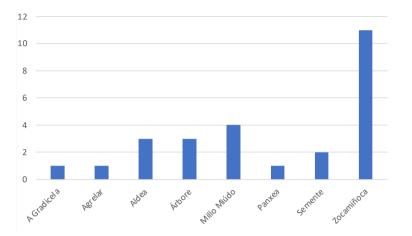


Figure 1. Sample distribution considering the initiative to which they belong (or belonged in the past).

As Figure 2, below, shows, the age of the participants in both phases III and IV rage from 35 to 65 years old. The sample was characterized by high-level of educated people, as 80% had a university degree.

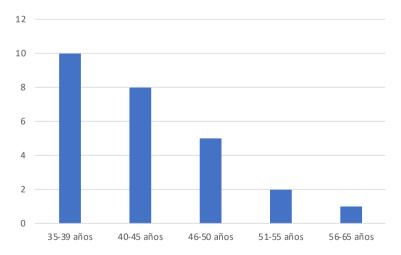


Figure 2. Sample distribution considering the age of the participants in both exploratory and semi-structured interviews.

3.3. Data analysis procedure

All interviews were audio-recorded and later literally transcribed. A rigorous coding process and data analysis and interpretation was conducted supported

by Atlas.ti V.9 software. An inductive coding process was followed in each interview, whose results informed the consequent empirical phases, and allowed to delve into the themes, processes, dynamics, and recurrent patterns rising from the interviews. Likewise, the use of Atlas.ti software allowed determining the relevance and groundedness of the codes and categories. A triangulation of methods, sources and theories was conducted, which augmented the consistency, rigour and robustness of the study.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Underlying motivations to organic and sustainable consumption

In-depth interviews explored the different factors driving consumption of organically produced fresh groceries and other goods, and, secondly, people's motivations to join a local consumption initiative. When asked about their reasons to purchase organic fresh food and other products, the participants in this study argue that their decisions are motivated by a combination of factors that have been grouped into main five categories (see *Table 1*): (i) Environmental concern; (ii) Personal health and well-being; (iii) awareness-rising; (iv) Altruistic and social justice values; and (v) attachment to rural areas.

The findings show that self-oriented motivations are particularly significant for organic and sustainable food consumption for most of the participants in the study, independently the type of organization and the locality in which they live. Participants report the desire of sustaining healthy diets based on the high quality of seasonal organically produced groceries. Organic products are thus perceived as safer, healthier, better tasting and more nutritive than conventional food, confirming previous studies in the field (MAPAMA, 2017; Cruwys et al., 2015; Moser, 2015, 2016). Moreover, participants are well educated people who show a profound acknowledgement on the impact of food production and transportation and, coherently, report the desire to reduce the ecological impact of their daily practice. However, awareness-raising on the need to actively reduce the ecological footprint appears to be a consequence of a specific situation, life event or personal experience that became a trigger for a change in individual lifestyles.

As illustrated in the *Figure 3*, strong linkages exist between environmental concern, health-oriented motivations and awareness-raising, on the need to reduce the ecological footprint, due to a specific context or personal experience that become a trigger for a change in individual lifestyles. Organic food consumption appears also associated with altruistic and socially oriented values, aligned with solidarity and social justice, building new types of relations between both the global North and South (e.g., endorsing animal welfare or the fair-trade movements).

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION. ADVANCES FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

Finally, feelings of connectedness with the rural territory motivates the desire of protecting these specific environments by supporting organic and local agriculture and primary sector of the economy. In addition, a relevant number of interviewees report their desire to maintain and preserve Galician rural lifestyle, to which they feel attached by an emotional bond, although they do not ever live in these areas or they do not do it anymore, but they still have family roots that enhance this sense of attachment to the land.

Table 1. Motivations underlying conscious consumption.

Code	Description
Environmental concern	Environmental concern about environmental risks, climate emergency and impact of food system.
Health and personal wellbeing	Desire to consume healthy and organic food (free of pesticides or GMOs), personal health and that of your family acquires a priority role.
Altruism and socially oriented values	Altruism concerns, desire to improve the lives of those who are in disadvantaged situations. Socially oriented values are aligned with solidarity and social justice, building new types of relations between both the global North and South.
Attachment to rural	Sense of attachment to rural areas dedicated mainly to primary sector of economy; and desire to dignify small farmers/producers and sustain (Galician) traditional lifestyles.
Awareness-rising	Awareness-rising due to an event or personal experience that acts as a trigger for a change in individual consumption styles and that understands eating as an essential part of a set of desirable pro-environmental behaviours.

4.2. Motivations for participation in a conscious and responsible consumption initiative

Concerning the decision to engage in collective forms of consumption (e.g., being a member of consumer's cooperative), most of the participants in this study argue a combination of different motivations (see *Table 2*) which relates, first, to the identification of these organizations as the most suitable spaces for satisfying their desire to sustain a "green" lifestyle". Thus, the perceived accessibility and affordability to organic and fair-trade groceries becomes one of the major reasons to join a local food coop, followed by the manifestation of sociopolitical ambitions and the desire to support Social and Local Economy sector. Interviewees explicit a desire for autonomy and control over their purchasing decisions, becoming independent of global corporations and supermarkets.

Galician food activists do share common social and political ambitions and conceive food coops as grassroots movements with the capacity to change the dominant social paradigms challenging the unsustainable practices that characterize the dominant system of food production and distribution. Consumption is interpreted as "a political act", a new way of engaging in political activism, appealing to large structural changes such as the democratization of the economy. Food activists do experience political action when they create or

shift the entire purchasing environment and co-produce, together with farmers as well as variety of actors, more sustainable and democratic structures in economy. Despite these political ambitions, the Galician food movement presents differences comparing to other networks in Spain. For example, the participants in this study report a clear distance with the libertarian discourse that impregnated the Catalonian grassroots movement (Papaoikonomou, 2013; Suriñac, 2012) and various interviewees maintain a critical stance regarding radical positions while welcome a diversity of profiles and lifestyles in membership.

Food coop practitioners are found to be driven by both environmental and social reasons. For instance, to socialize with like-minded people, to expand their social network or friendships, or to experiment a sense of belonging, which lead to the desire to engage in collective projects. A limited sample of participants reported that the decision of joining a consumption initiative relies on the desire to socialize with like-minded people, expanding their social network or friendships. Besides, they do often report a sense of belonging as a consequence of being involved in collective consumption, which leads to the desire to engage in community-led projects and social innovations who share common values, goals and concerns. Also, these participants stress their ambition to change the relationships between consumers and producers, fostering mutual respect, proximity, and empathy, recognizing, and dignifying the work of the farmer/producer. These results are coherent with recent studies that researched grassroots initiatives in the food domain (Dumitru et al., 2016 a,b; Suriñac, 2012). The conceptual map of motivations for conscious consumption in the frame of the consumers initiatives (see Figure 3) illustrates the types of relations between the distinct categories of motivations described in this chapter.

Table 2. Motivations for becoming a member of a conscious consumption initiative.

Code	Description
Green lifestyles	Identification of the CRCI as an enabling space for climate-friendly, fair and ethical consumption.
Accessibility	Accessibility, availability and affordability with respect to environmentally and socially responsible food
Socio-political ambitions	Aspirations for social transformation. Desire for been involved in sociopolitical and/or socially transformative movements
Local economies	Support locally based economic alternatives based on the articulation of short market circuits
New relations in economy	New relationship models in the economic context, fostering models of prosumerism and co- responsibility in the food system
Autonomy	Self-management aspirations in the economic and consumer sphere
Relatedness	Affective or relational needs: connecting with people who share common principles and values

184

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION. ADVANCES FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COLLECTIVE FORMS OF CONSUMPTION

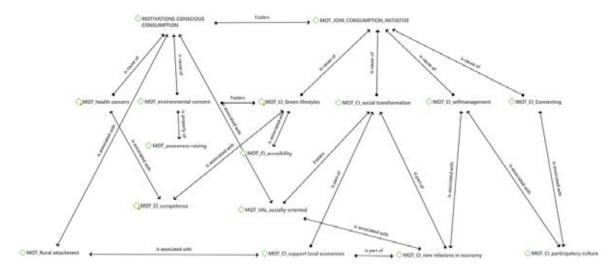


Figure 3. Conceptual map of motivations for conscious consumption in the frame of the CRCIs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Green consumption has become central for research on climate action and green lifestyles. This study explored the social and psychological dimensions that interplay in people's patterns of consumption. It contributes to the understanding of the different human motivations, needs and desires underlying green consumption behaviour stressing the existing close relation between health-orientation motivations, environmental awareness-rising, and the performance of conscious consumption practices in households. Although previous research stresses the positive relationship between the values and attitudes that support organic food and purchase intentions, the Galician food movement hosts a diversity of consumer profiles who share different lifestyles and perform their consumption patterns according to a variety of reasons. Findings of this study point that sustainable consumption is strongly influenced by health orientation reasons and affective responses to food, as well as situational factors, such as the availability and accessibility to green and fair-trade products.

The results of this study suggest that awareness of the environmental, social, and economic impact of consumption is a direct antecedent for responsible behaviour. Galician food activists are guided by altruistic motivations and sociopolitical ambitions, searching for more supportive, ethical and sustainable food-systems. The Galician Conscious and Responsible Consumption Network endorse transformative discourses and practices in economy that support organic farming and social and solidarity economy networks and claiming also more fair relationships between the Global North and the Global South. Hence, collective forms of consumption are perceived by these food activists as effective means

of "putting utopian discourses into practice". Food coops are perceived as "real manifestations" of bottom-up, community-led projects, which have the capacity for achieving real impact on the field.

Feelings of connectedness with the rural territory also motivates action to protect these specific environments by supporting local economies. Such connection is often motivated by their family roots, which persist even although they do not live in these rural environments This is consistent with place-attachment research, which has examined people's feelings of connection to specific physical and natural environments (Ariccio et al., 2022; Hernández, 2021).

The findings of this research highlight the relevance of intrinsic motivations, like the desire of autonomy and connectedness. Galician activists explicit the desire to achieve a certain "social happiness" based on establishing meaningful relationships working with like-minded others in common goals. Activists experience pleasure in doing what is right, aligned with their moral personal values, while experience community life (Vita et al., 2020). These results stress the need to study not only individual behaviours but explore the factors underlying the willingness to join a local initiative (e.g., agri-food alternative, food coops) or a community movement.

Considering the limited availability of scientific evidence on the contribution of local and grassroots initiatives toward sustainable lifestyles, this research provides empirical data on the motivations and aspirations for people to join collective forms of consumption. Notwithstanding, a more profound comprehension is still needed on the determining social dynamics and conditions for behavioural change in each specific climate relevant behaviour, since the factors that can influence the adoption of desirable behaviour in a concrete domain may not affect the execution of different ones, as the empirical evidence on sustainable food consumption demonstrates.

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION. ADVANCES FROM

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87

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION. ADVANCES FROM

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