A Matter of Trust: The Role of Consumer-Citizens and Civil Society for Charting Transitions Towards a Green Economy

Marlyne Sahakian
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

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“Sustainable consumption” research

Question
• How can consumer-citizens transition to more “sustainable” pathways towards a “green economy”?

Hypothesis
• We can not ignore the social dimension.

Context
• The Southeast Asian mega-city of Metro Manila, the Philippines.
The contested concept of “sustainability”
Social practice approach

Social practices, made up of actions and discourse

material -> social -> cognitive

social <- cognitive <- material
A walk down memory lane…

social

material

cognitive
In “sustainability community”: historical emphasis on production and technical optimism
In social science community:
historical focus on products and symbolic meaning
Over-emphasis on « individual choice »

Diagram:
- Social
- Material
- Cognitive

Arrows indicate relationships between the concepts.
Context and Methodology

Tondo  Malate  Makati

< PHP 5,000 / USD 100  > PHP 500,000 / USD 10,000
Energy Consumption Patterns and Filipino Households

Social and Cultural Understanding of Consumption: « Cooling »

Tondo

Malate

Makati

Actual Photo - Alicante Model House

PHILIPPINE TATLER

The Christmas Issue

EXCLUSIVE: THE ART OF NATOR INTERVIEW WITH TORY BURCH, LIVING LIFE ON LINE, VAN CLEEF & ARPELS, 21ST CENTURY SUPER JET AND MORE
Talking about ‘energy’ in Metro Manila: what people hear
Talking about ‘energy’ in Metro Manila: what people say

- Confusion over what to do, priorities
- Misunderstanding of issues
- Lack of holistic, systemic thinking
- Focus on “personal sacrifice”
- Tired of moralistic “preachy” messages
- Trust: important factor
Where are the trusted social networks in Metro Manila?

- Informal social networks
- High trust
- Celebrities
- Faith-based orgs
- NGO / CSO
- Barangay
- Private sector
- Politicians
- Meralco
- ‘Government’

High bridging
Conclusion & Discussion

- Focus in ‘energy discourse’ is on individual choice/action/change
- Need for institutional change (laws, values and norms)
- Tension between the two: what space for consumer-citizens?
- One pathway: identifying existing, trusted social networks
- And topics with high “bridging” capacity
- Relevance of a social practice, context-based approach
Thank you for your attention

marlyne.sahakian@graduateinstitute.ch

More about sustainable consumption:
SCORAI.org, Sustainable consumption research and action initiative.