Sustainable consumption: panel discussion

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What is the problem with consumption?

• A large, unique form of common pool resource dilemma
  – the size of the pool of resources is unknown;
  – people differ in their access to resources;
  – people must make their decisions about the use of goods and services without a clear understanding of the types and quantities of the resources used in their production and consequences of their decisions.

• We see:
  – Achieving happiness through material consumption
  – Excessive consumption of goods and services rather than overuse of natural resources
Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption provides value to people by decoupling material-based growth from economic growth and environmental impact.

Contribution to sustainable production & consumption discourse

• It is not about consuming or spending less (rebounds), but about spending on less material offers
• Too much guilt and moralism
• Problem is in the business profit centre -> from product to function/utility
• It is about cost-benefit evaluation for consumers
• Need to change
  – consumer value system
  – social institution frameworks
Contribution to sustainable production & consumption discourse

- Production side improvements have limits
- Consumption side explored to some extent, but not linked to production
- System level improvement is needed
- Merger and cross-fertilisation
- Potential for improvement and new actors involvement along the value chain
- Involving customers in design and product conception phase may improve customer satisfaction
- So far we evaluate traditional patterns, but what are the new ideas?
- Need for new solutions and examples

Important actors in sustainable production and consumption

- Business
- Government
- Insurance
- Venture capital
- Trend setters/media
- Private consumers
- Research/academia
Reaching factor 10-20?

(Brezet 2001)

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System innovation

Function Innovation

Product Redesign

Product/Process Improvement

Time

Future steps

• Need for new and alternative solutions that
  – Illustrate possibilities and alternatives
  – Show higher level of integration along the value chain
  – Identify leverage points among actors & within networks
  – Measure customer satisfaction with alternative solutions
  – Balance environmental soundness, economic feasibility and consumer satisfaction