

7 Communication about Sustainability

Lesson 04: Sustainable Consumption

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Übersicht zur gesamten Lerneinheit

- Episode 7.1: Key concepts of communication
- Episode 7.2: The „public“ & Public discourses
- Episode 7.3: Sustainability issues & crises
- Episode 7.4: Sustainable Consumption**



Learning outcomes

Learning outcome 1:

Describe the diverse nature of contemporary practices of sustainability communication on an individual, organizational and societal level, the relationship of strategic communication practices to other public communication practices, the role of stakeholders and publics and the communication practitioners in and outside of organizations (corporate, NGO, political and educational institutions etc.)

Learning outcome 2:

Develop comprehensive and well-founded knowledge in sustainability communication as field of study, an understanding of how other disciplines relate to the field and an international perspective on the field.

Learning outcome 3:

Understand the key elements of communication theories, strategies and tactics, and, thus, the character and operationalization of best practice sustainability communication planning frameworks.

Learning outcome 4:

Advance your understanding of social and civic responsibility and develop an appreciation of the philosophical and social context of sustainability communication. Advance your knowledge and respect of ethics and ethical standards in relation to communication of, about and for sustainability.

Learning outcome 5:

Anticipate and Interpret current issues and challenges of a world in transformation and social change. Develop a deep understanding of and skills to create change, develop advocacy, leadership and authorship in and for sustainability communication.



Overview

- A. Definitions
- B. Relevance & Responsibilities
- C. Research focus
- D. Policy & Frameworks
- E. Communication perspective



A. Definition

Sustainable consumption

- a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of her/his private consumption or who attempts to use her/his purchasing power to bring about social changes
- one who purchases products and services perceived to have a positive (or a less negative) influence on the environment or who patronizes businesses that attempt to effect related positive social changes



A. Definition

From an issue perspective...

- Sustainable Consumption
- AND Sustainable Production



B. Relevance & Responsibilities

- One key solution to solve the global sustainability challenges is in changing the ways we consume (Ruby et al., 2020).
- Sustainable consumption (SC), “a process of decisions and actions, not limited to the moment of purchase, but considering the whole lifecycle of a product or service” (Sesini, Castiglioni, & Lozza, 2020, p. 2),
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 12



Source: www.theglobalgoals.org/resources



B. Relevance & Responsibilities

- Why?



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B. Relevance & Responsibilities

- Lack of understanding, leadership
- Comfortable lifestyle
- Budget constraints
- History, culture of “free tuff”
- Tradition
- Short term thinking
- No obvious rewards
- Social inequity



C. Research focus

- sustainable practices alongside sustainable food and purchasing are the most frequently studied aspects of SC (Gustavsen & Hegnes, 2020; Sanchez-Sabate & Sabate, 2019; Morone et al., 2017, Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006)
- sustainable food / eating behaviour: heavily medialized (Halkier, 2010; Skitka et al., 2021; Weder et al., forthcoming).
- consumer behaviour – marketing! (e.g. Belotti & Panzone, 2016; Castro & Lima, 2001; Davis et al., 2020; Lunde, 2018; White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019)
- **HOWEVER:** taking into the account a social view – different contexts and the many aspects and complexities of daily life and acknowledging that SC is about social rather than just individual change (Hargreaves, 2011).



D. Policy & Frameworks

Consumption

- Increase awareness
- Raise knowledge
- Change attitudes
Create intentions to act
- Achievement of change in behavior

Production

- Regulatory
- Economic instruments
- Information,
communication, education



D. Policy & Frameworks

Regulatory

- Product design standards
- Restrictions on products (i.e. pesticides)
- Bans (plastic bags, single use plastic etc.)
- Labeling (food labels, energy stars, water sense)
- Extended producer responsibility (CSR)
- Statutor targets (CSR; pollution, emissions etc.)

Economic instruments

- Eco taxes (carbon tax, price signals)
- Producer incentives, innovation funds (for sustainable business operations)
- Consumer subsidies (for environmentally friendly products)



D. Policy & Frameworks

Weak

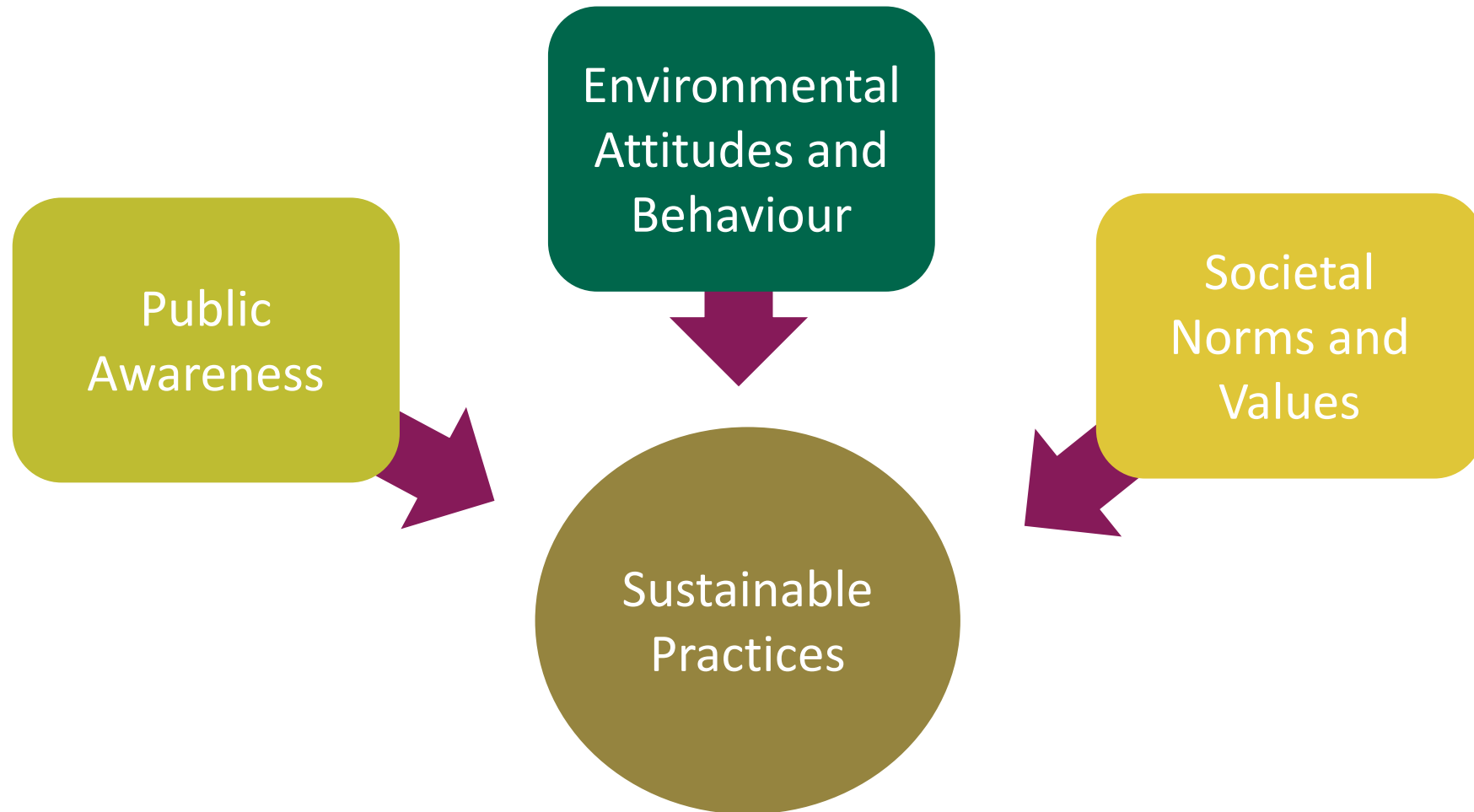
- Low regulatory intervention
- Voluntary action (individual, market)
- „Green consumerism“
- Efficiency focus/greening existing patterns of consumption

Strong

- Systemic approach
- Macro-economic issues
- Sufficiency focus: reduce overall consumption!



E. Communication Perspective on Consumption





E. Communication Perspective on Consumption

- Social practices

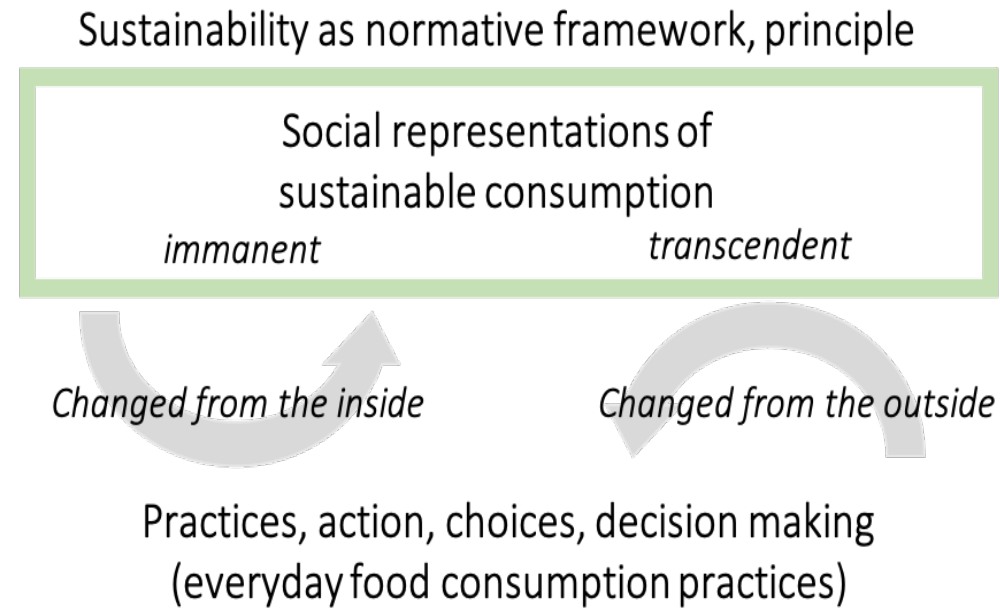


E. Communication Perspective on Consumption

- Social representations

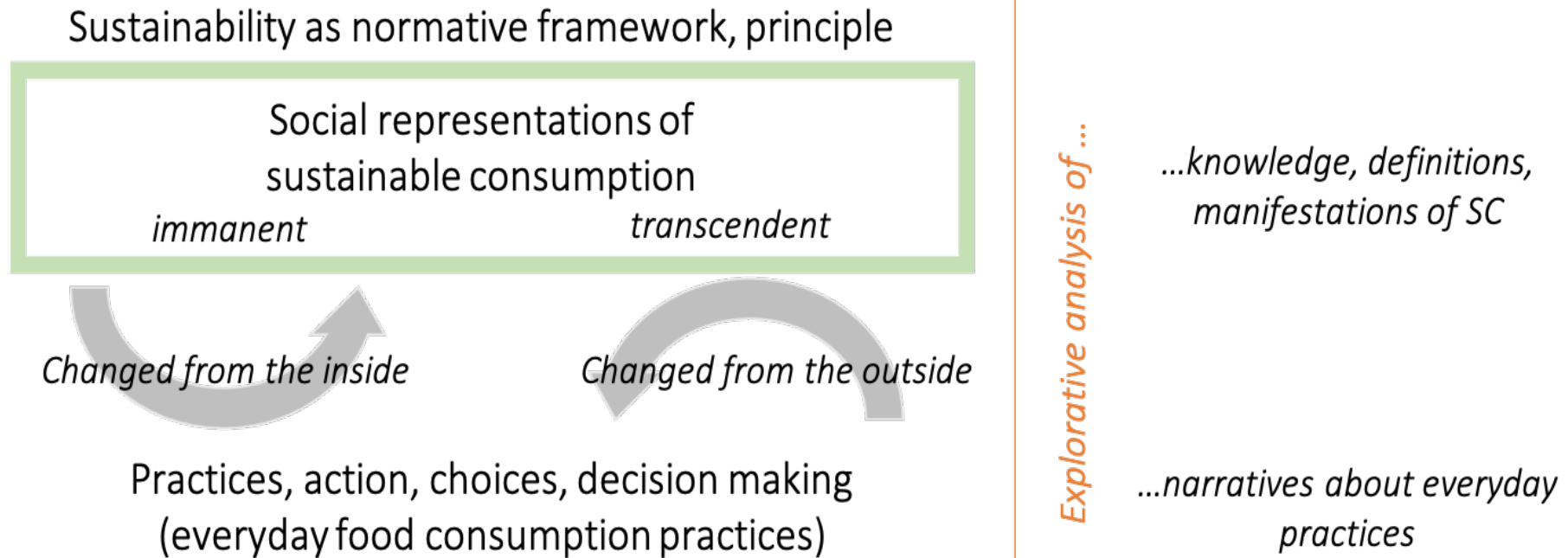


E. Communication Perspective on Consumption





E. Communication Perspective on Consumption





Reflections

Do you consider yourself as sustainable consumer?

Why?

What would you need to do better?



Reflections

- Why is sustainable consumption one of the most dominant issue areas where sustainability is debated?
- Who possibly dominates the public discourse on sustainable practices / and sustainable consumption in particular?
- What are issues and discourses related to sustainable consumption?
- On which levels (interpersonal communication, organizational/strategic communication and media/public communication) is sustainable consumption predominantly discussed? Who are the voices that are not heard? Why?