



**Green Economy and Sustainable Development:
Bringing Back the Social Dimension
CONFERENCE**

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

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“Sustainable consumption” research

Question

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

Hypothesis

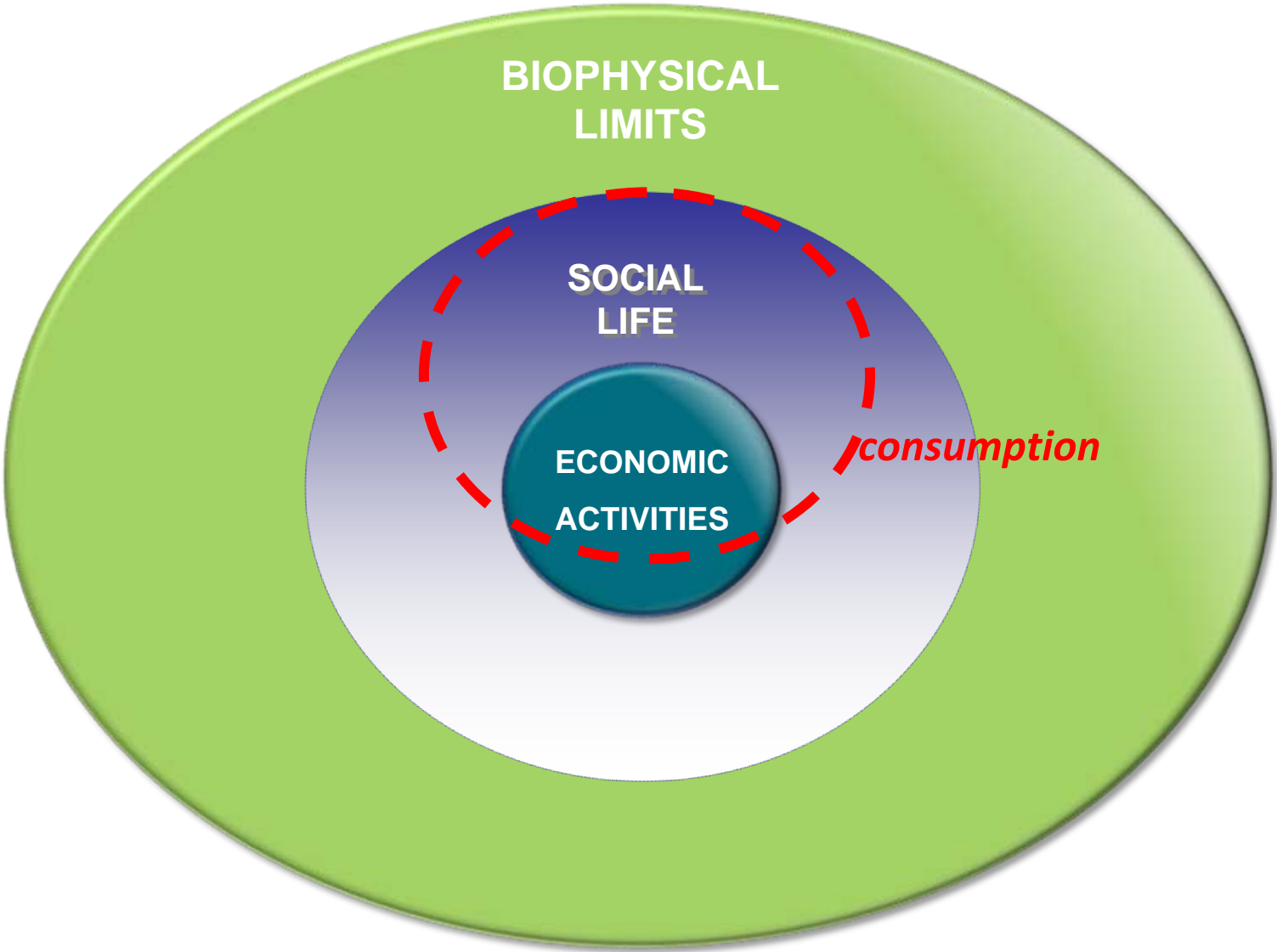
- We can not ignore the social dimension.

Context

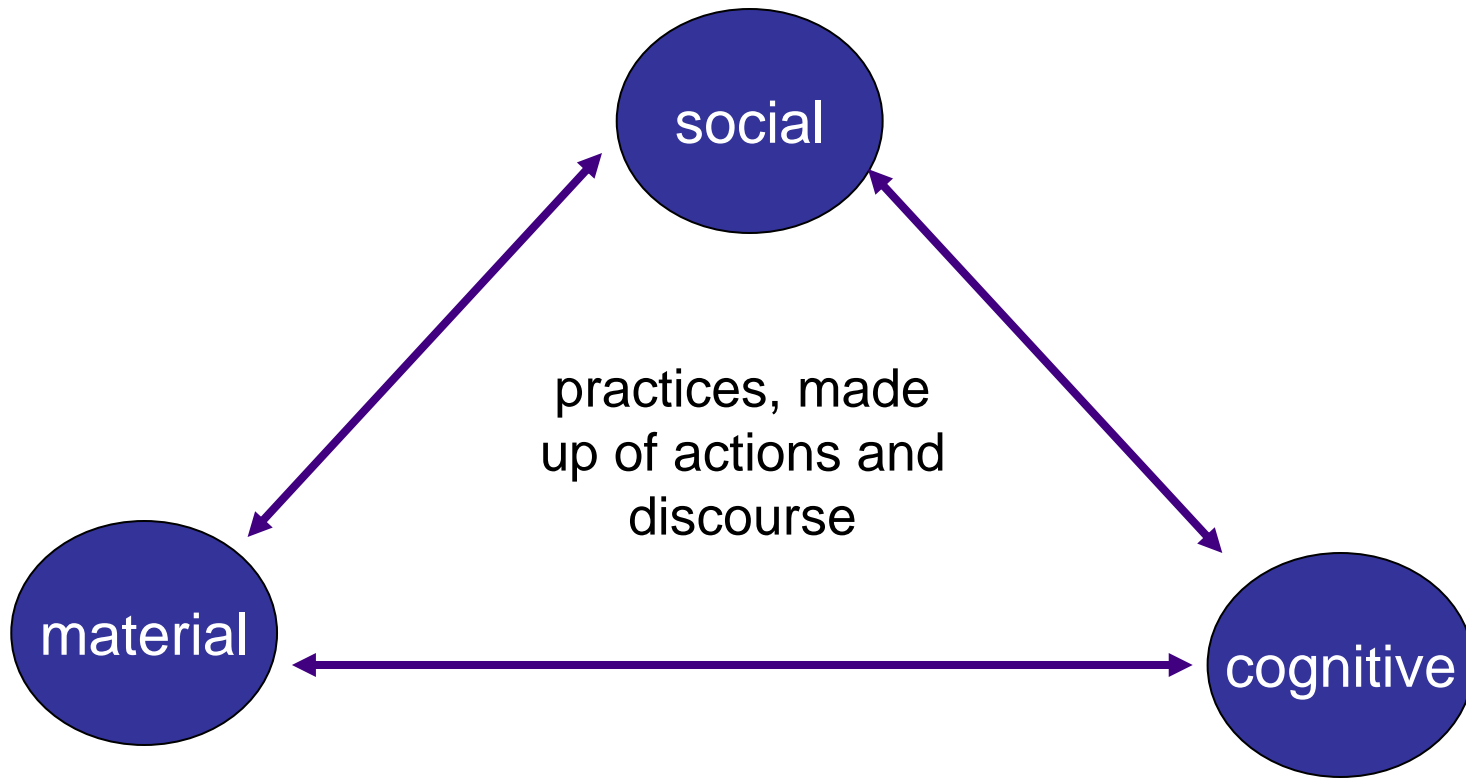
- The Southeast Asian mega-city of Metro Manila, the Philippines.



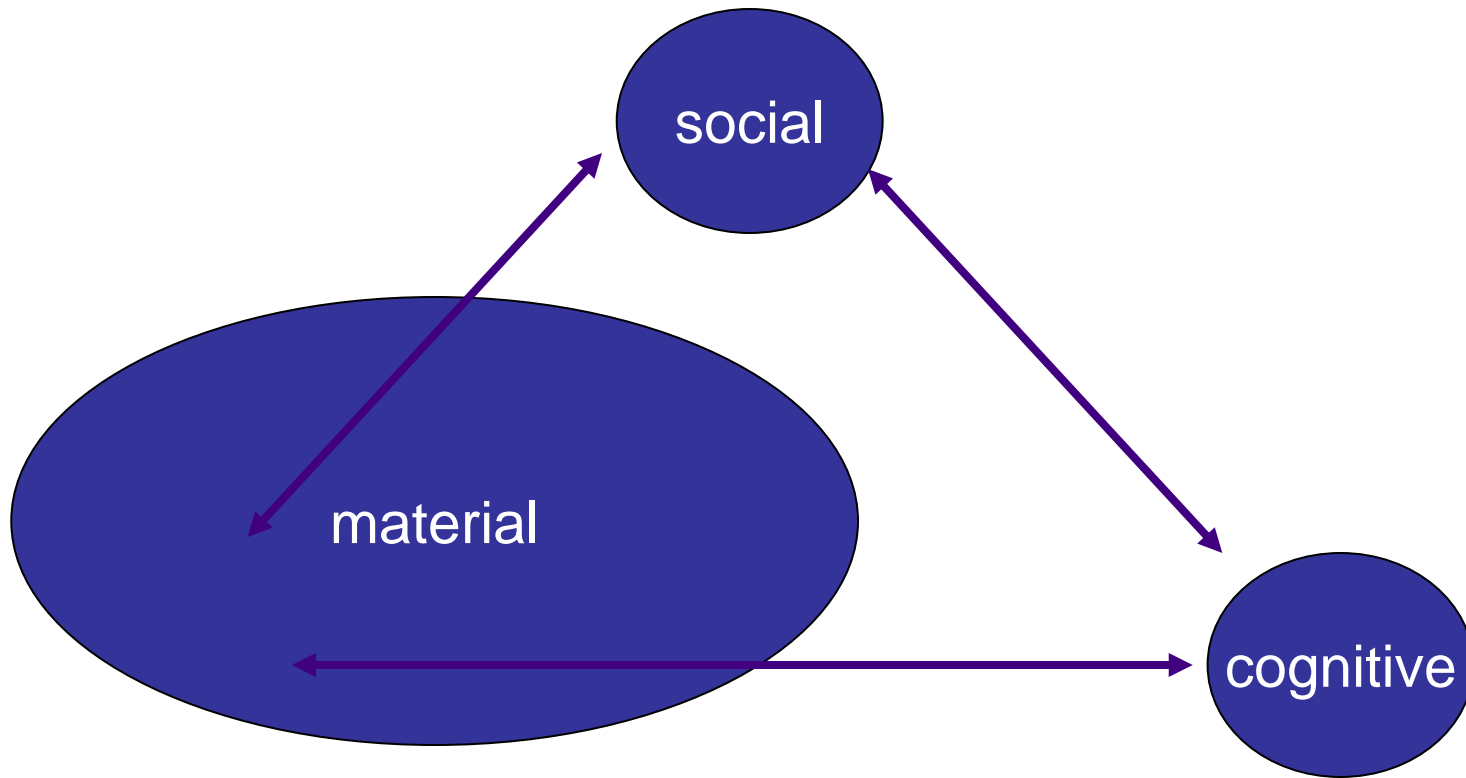
The contested concept of “sustainability”



Social practice approach



A walk down memory lane...



In “sustainability community”:
historical emphasis on production and technical optimism



Production

Life cycle analysis
Cleaner production
Industrial symbiosis
Eco-design
Etc.



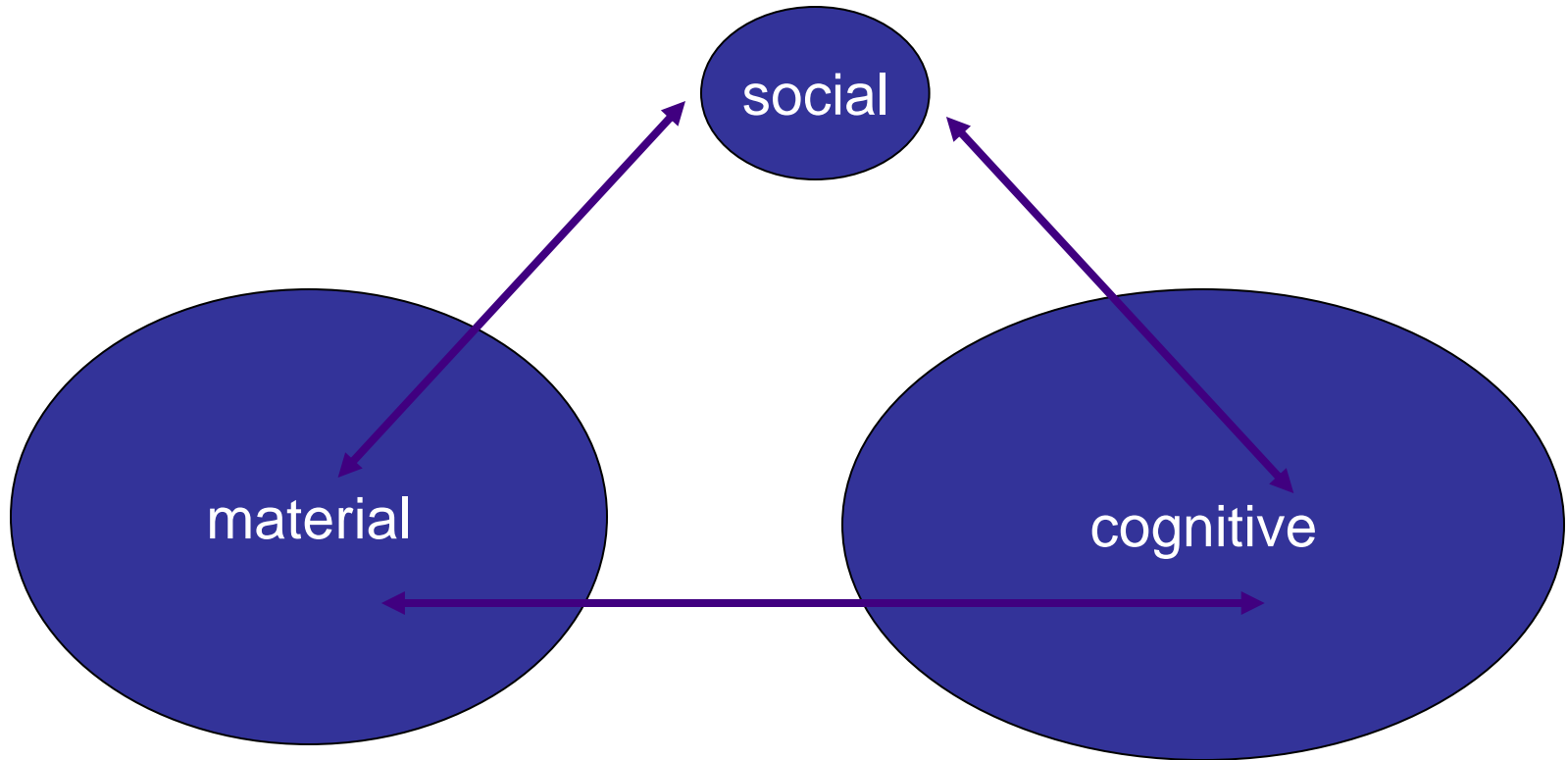
Consumption

Protection
Information
(eco-labels)
?

In social science community: historical focus on products and symbolic meaning



Over-emphasis on « individual choice »



Context and Methodology

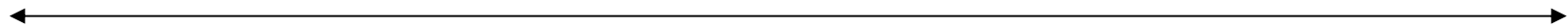
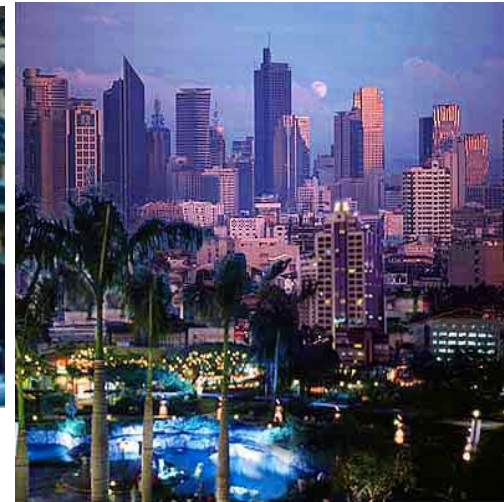
Tondo



Malate



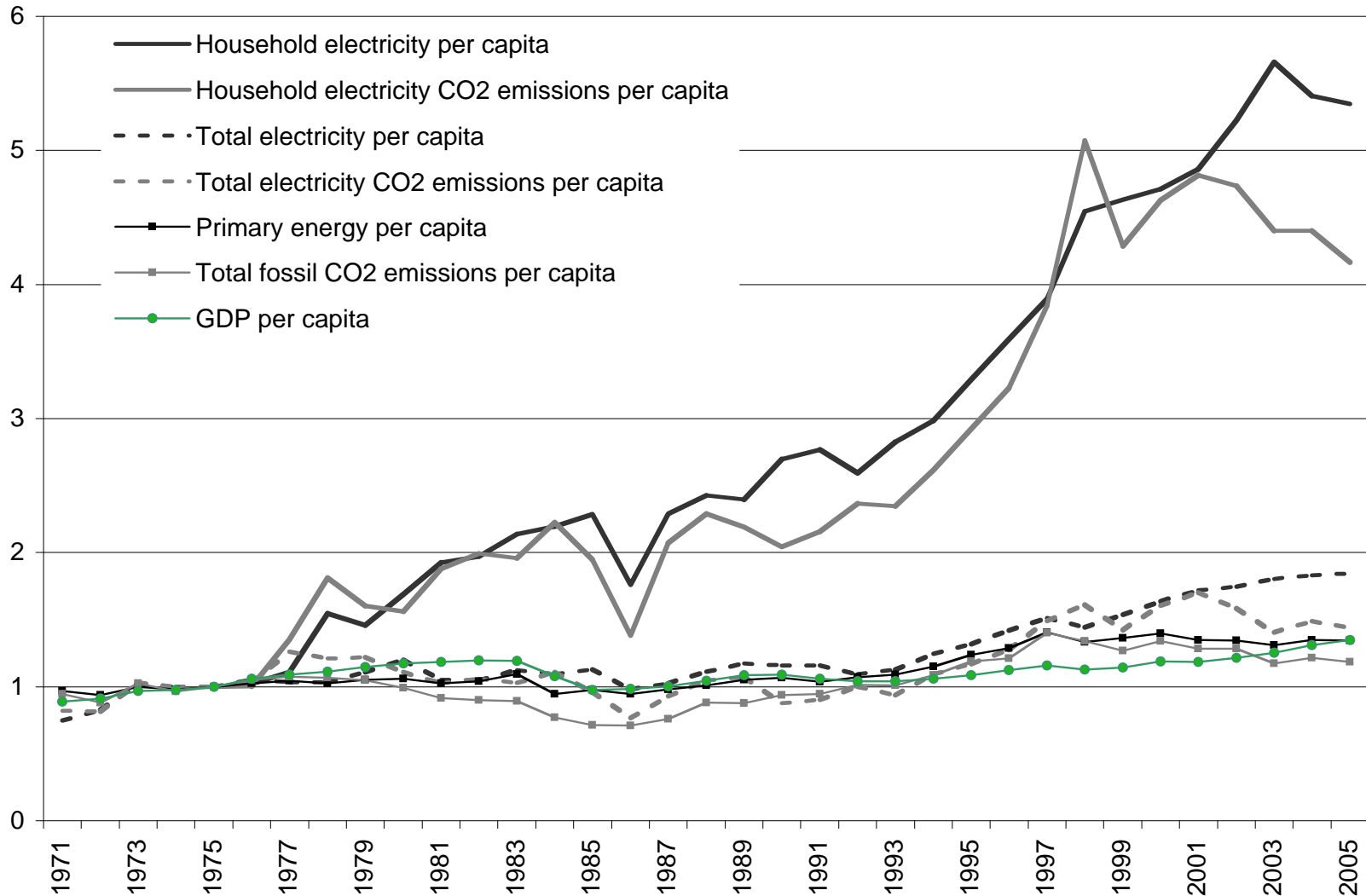
Makati



< PHP 5,000 / USD 100

> PHP 500,000 / USD 10,000

Energy Consumption Patterns and Filipino Households



Sources: UN 2007; IEA 2007; Boden and Marland 2009; The Conference Board 2009.
Reference: Sahakian & Steinberger, Journal of Industrial Ecology, 2011

Social and Cultural Understanding of Consumption: « Cooling »

Tondo



Malate



Makati

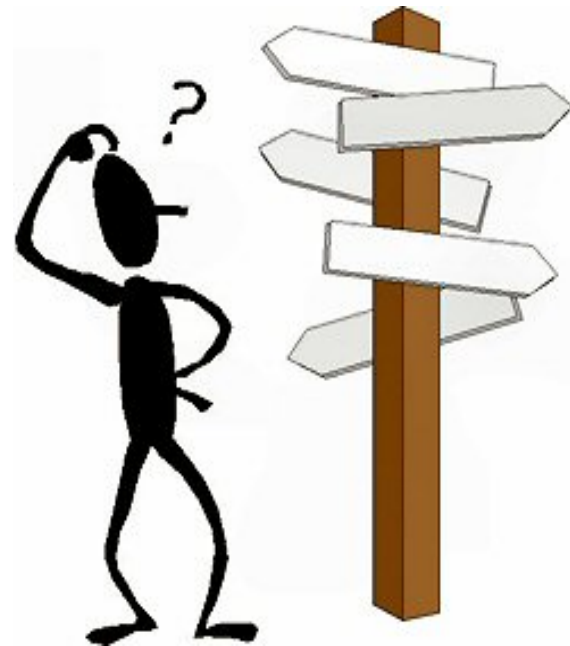


Talking about 'energy' in Metro Manila: *what people hear*

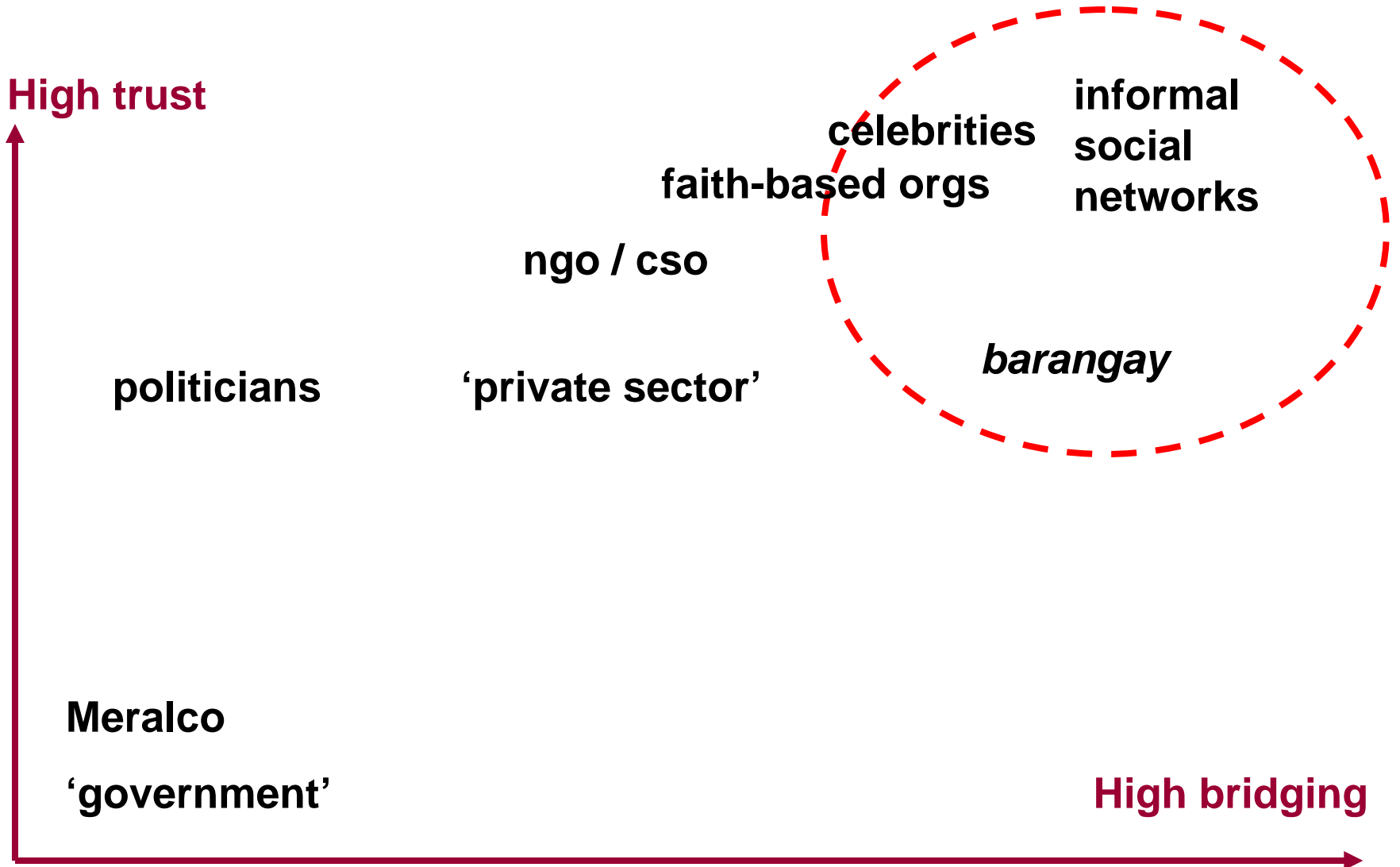


Talking about 'energy' in Metro Manila: *what people say*

- 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?





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

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More about sustainable consumption:

SCORAI.org, Sustainable consumption research and action initiative.

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