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**Panel 5.1: Behavioural change: Models for sustainable
consumption and production**

Transforming Lifestyles and Consumption Patterns Towards a Sustainable Low-carbon Society

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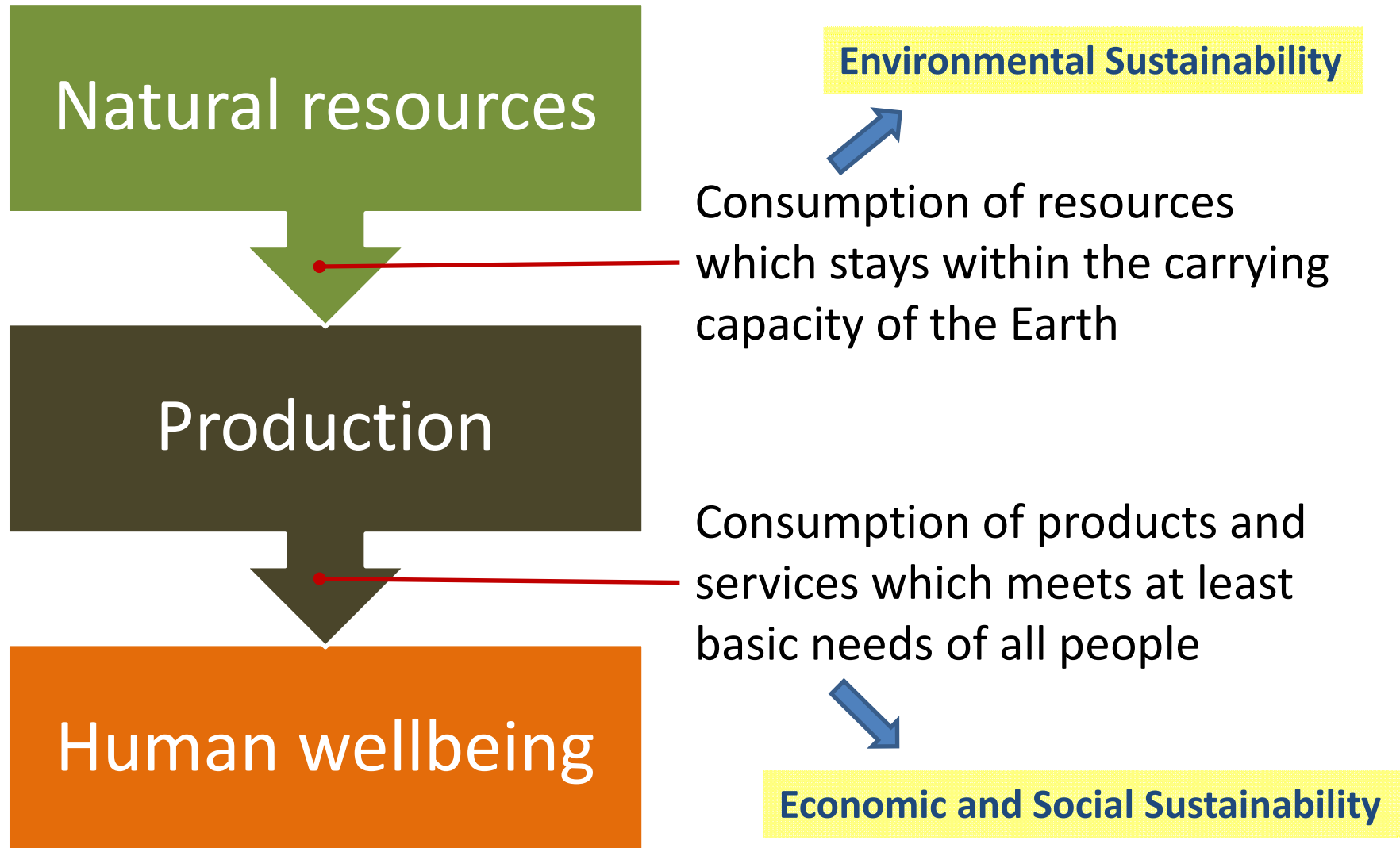
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies



Starting Points

- The creation of a SLCS will require a more radical and fundamental transformation than most of us realize
- Technological change and efficiency improvements are important but insufficient
- Changes in values, aspirations and lifestyles will be also be necessary
- However, the need for such changes is often not recognized

Sustainable Consumption – Two Separate but Connected Aspects



The Standard Approach to Sustainable Consumption

Many approaches to Sustainable Consumption focus on the **buying decisions made by individual consumers**.

Such approaches are based on the idea that consumers are “**voting with their wallets**”, and that enlightened and responsible consumers can drive the market towards sustainability.

Policy proposals based on this idea typically emphasize:

- Awareness raising and consumer education
- Information to consumers on products' environmental performance, e.g. eco-labelling

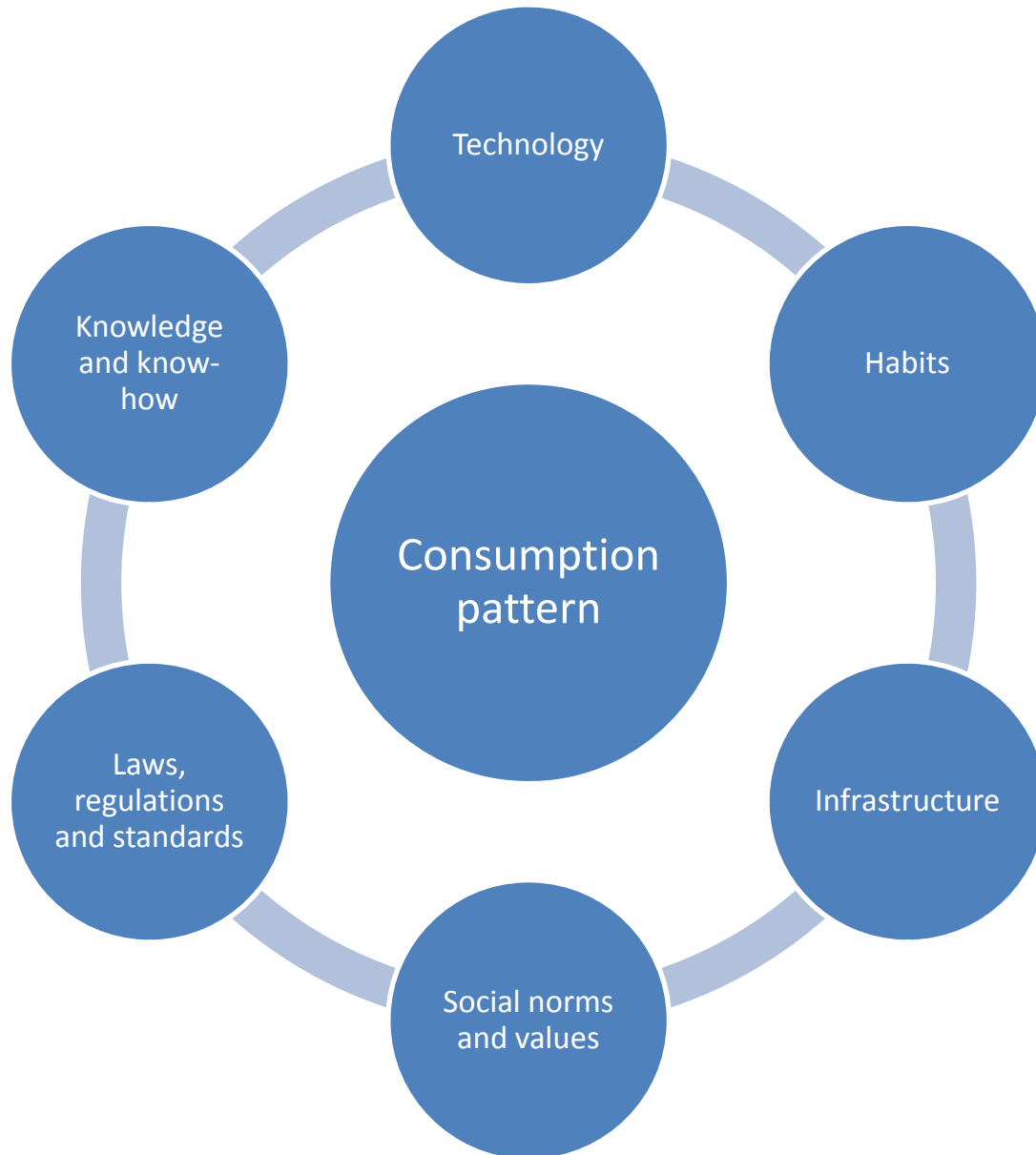


Individual Consumers are Weak

The **role of individual consumers is overstated** and consumers are often unfairly blamed for consuming unsustainably

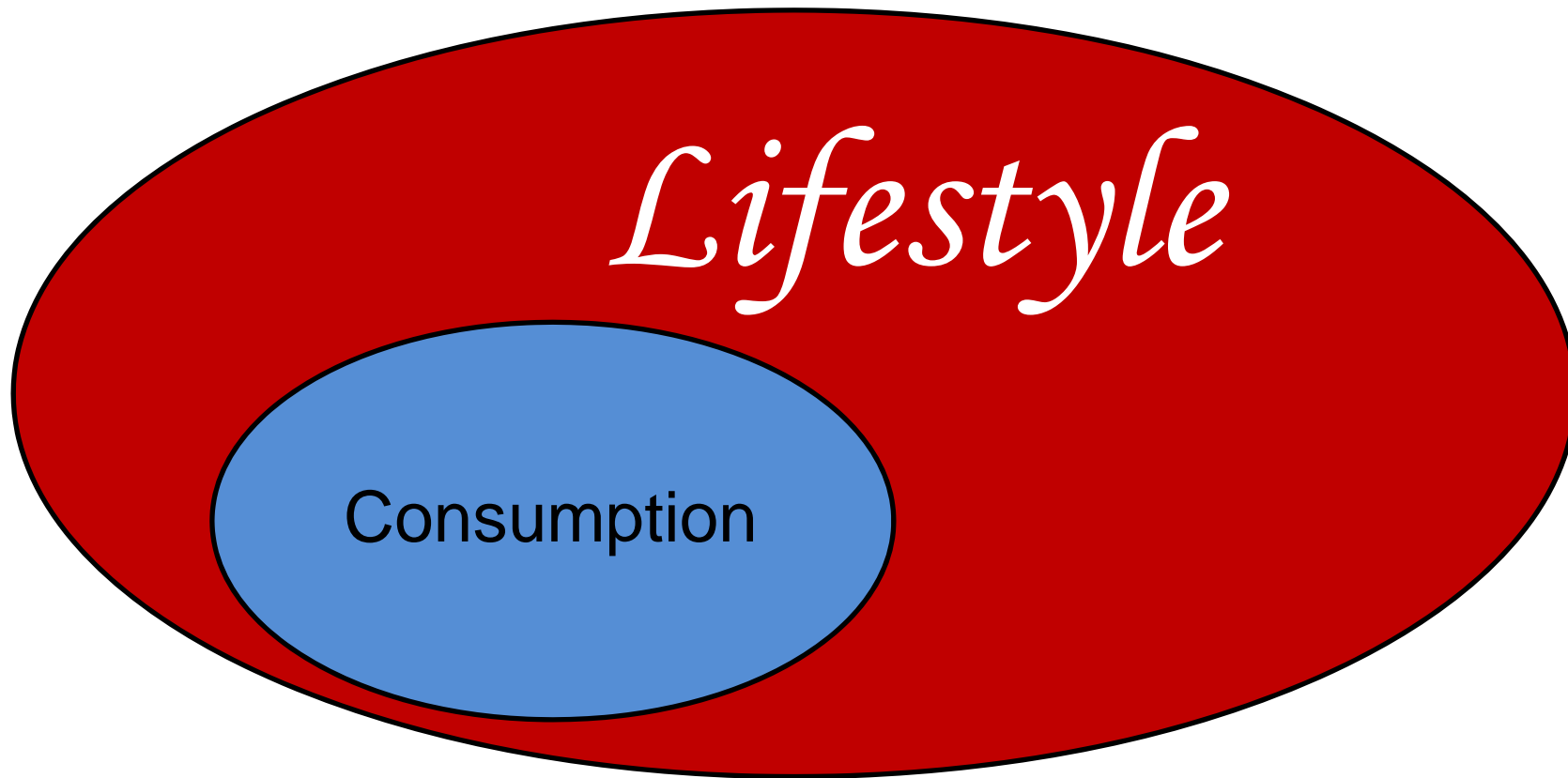
- Consumers' choices are limited to what producers want to offer
- Consumer prices do not reflect the life-cycle environmental impacts of products and services
- Consumers feel strong expectations from society to consume
 - Consumption as self-expression
 - Consumption as group identity signal
 - Consumption as social status marker
- Social pressure to consume more is amplified by advertising and by political initiatives to expand the economy
- Consumer choice is often habitual and unreflected
- “I will if you will”

Systems Transformation is Needed



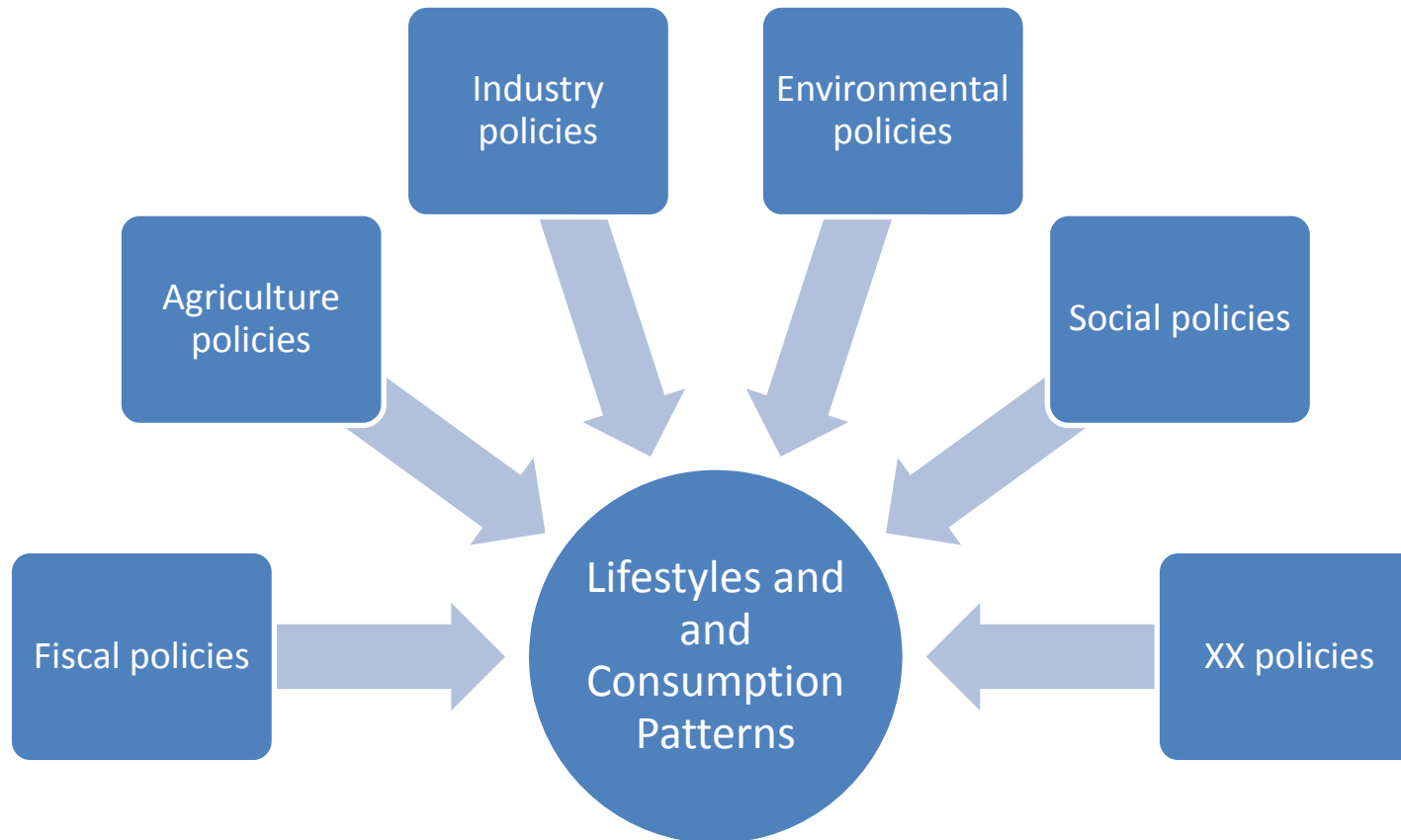
- Consumption patterns are supported and constrained by complex socio-technical systems
- Radical transformation of consumption patterns require that whole systems be modified
- Consumers have limited possibility to bring about systems changes

A lifestyles approach to SC



- Important to look at lifestyles and not to focus narrowly on consumption
- Important to understand the role of consumption in different lifestyles

Lifestyles and Consumption Patterns are Influenced by All Major Policy Areas



- Add-on environmental policies are insufficient for enabling SC
- The necessary transition to SC will not happen unless major policies are redesigned

SC Requires Enabling Policy Measures

- SC requires **more than simply encouraging consumers** to make responsible buying decisions
- It requires **enabling measures addressing the structures** that drive and shape consumption
- Policy measures need to be broad-based and **involve the policies of several different line ministries**
- Such actions require **collective decisions based on democratic deliberation**
- Concerned individuals need to promote SC also **outside of their role as consumers**, working for changes that can enable SC
 - Influencing political decisions
 - Taking action at community level