



Sustainable Consumption The Challenges

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Sustainable Consumption – some popular misunderstandings

If people talk about the Sustainable Consumption
what do they understand “Consumption” stands for?

- Resource consumption
- Consumption in economic terms (private consumption (C) + public consumption (S))
- Household consumption (e.g. electricity consumption, car use, possession of durable goods)

Sustainable Consumption has to reflect resource consumption

→ otherwise we risk to get lost in discussion about marginal's like equipment of households with energy efficient light bulbs.

Sustainable Consumption – how to make consumption sustainable

Efficient resource use for human well-being

Sustainable Consumption: the most used definition (Oslo Roundtable 1994)

“the use of services and related products which respond to **basic needs** and bring a better **quality of life** while **minimising the use of natural resources** and toxic materials as well as the **emissions** of waste and pollutants over the life-cycle so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.”

$$\text{Sustainable Consumption} = \frac{\text{need fulfilment}}{\text{resource use}} \quad \text{or in other words} \quad \frac{\text{human well-being}}{\text{resource use}}$$

$$\text{SC} = \frac{\text{physical input}}{\text{resource used}} \times \frac{\text{product produced}}{\text{physical input}} \times \frac{\text{service provided}}{\text{product produced}} \times \frac{\text{service consumed}}{\text{service provided}} \times \frac{\text{human well-being}}{\text{service consumed}}$$

sourcing efficiency production efficiency product efficiency service efficiency efficient human well-being

Sustainable Consumption – necessary (but weak) Sustainable Consumption

Conventional intervention points to make resource consumption more sustainable

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(sustainable production, industrial ecology, etc)
 + life cycle thinking, efficient appliances, greening consumer demand

- Sustainable production, conventional intervention point for various decades already
- Life cycle approach also established for a while (Johannesburg Conference 2002)
- Global initiative for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) enforced by UNEP and European Union towards greening the markets

All the listed intervention points are necessary without doubt....
but they are not sufficient. Therefore they only build

a weak approach to Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable Consumption – shortcomings of weak Sustainable Consumption

Main shortcomings of the weak Sustainable Consumption approach

- Social aspects are widely neglected
- Search for solutions purely concentrates on market activities, on goods and services in form of commodities
- The approach rely on the promises of the growth paradigm to have a “better life” for everyone instead of searching for a “good life”

But evidence shows:

- Rebound effects compensate efficiency gains
- Increasing global population demands more resources
- Increasing affluence in developed as well as developing countries demand more resources

Sustainable Consumption – shortcomings of Weak Sustainable Consumption

$$\text{Impact} = \text{Population} \times \text{Affluence} \times \text{Technology}$$

What we know: $\text{Impact} \downarrow = \text{Population} \uparrow \times \text{Affluence} \uparrow \times \text{Technology} ?$

The hope of the proponents of weak sustainable consumption solely rests on the optimistic view about (upcoming) technological solutions

Real state of the world

		Real state of the world	
		Optimists right	Pessimists right
Current Policy	Technological optimistic policy	High	Desaster
	Technological pessimistic policy	Moderate	Tolerable

→ To be on the sure side sustainable consumption policies also have to tackle affluence

Sustainable Consumption – sufficient Strong Sustainable Consumption

Effective contribution to human well-being

The contribution of the service consumed to the well-being of the consuming individual of the sum of well-being generated through the resource input (a full stomach and warm shelter versus addictive shopping)

Service efficiency

Increase the factual rate of services consumed from the services provided (community gardening, sharing instead of ownership of cars, appliances, etc.; better use of public transport)

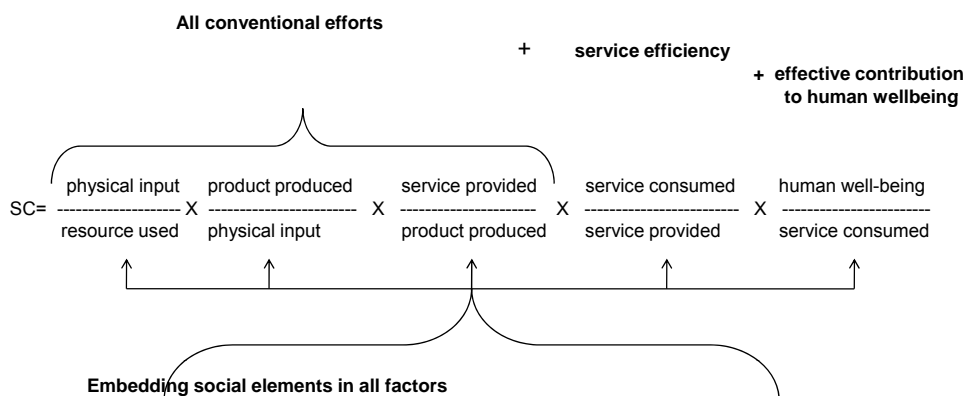
Embedding social elements in all factors:

Basic social rights (human rights + decent work)

Equity in access to resources, to production and consumption

Strengthening social & human capital (more social inclusion & social equity in societies)

Sustainable Consumption – sufficient Strong Sustainable Consumption



Develop solutions for all intervention points

→ the challenge for societies, policies and research

Sustainable Consumption – necessary contribution of research

Signs of hope for the time being: Civil society organisations and science

Research

Develop clear sustainability targets (e.g. Which reduction has to be made by when? How much have different sectors/countries to contribute)

Civil Society Organisations

Societal awareness raising and lobbying

Collaboration:

Research can provide advice to Civil Society Organisations how to bring the message of urgency for Strong Sustainable Consumption patterns across

Learning from sociology and political science not from marketing approaches

Transforming social innovations on the micro level (e.g. Communities) to the macro level