

Global and Regional Research on Sustainable Consumption and Production Systems: Achievements, Challenges and Dialogues



Sustainable Consumption within a Sustainable Economy – debunking buzzwords to develop the content

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(Mis-) Understandings of Sustainable Consumption

What to make sustainable?

If people talk about Sustainable Consumption what do they understand
“Consumption” to stand for?

- Household consumption (consumption habits, possession items)
- Consumption in economic terms (private consumption + public consumption)
- Resource consumption (business and industries also consumers)

(1) Sustainable Consumption has to reflect resource consumption

if not

→ discussions might get lost in marginal instead of relevant impacts

(Mis-) Understandings of Sustainable Consumption

Why make consumption sustainable?

The major cause of the continued deterioration of the **global environment** is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, ...

which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating **poverty** and **imbalances**

(Agenda 21, own emphasis)

“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 jeopardise the needs of **future generations**.”

(Oslo Symposium 1994, own emphasis)

(2) Sustainable Consumption has an environmental

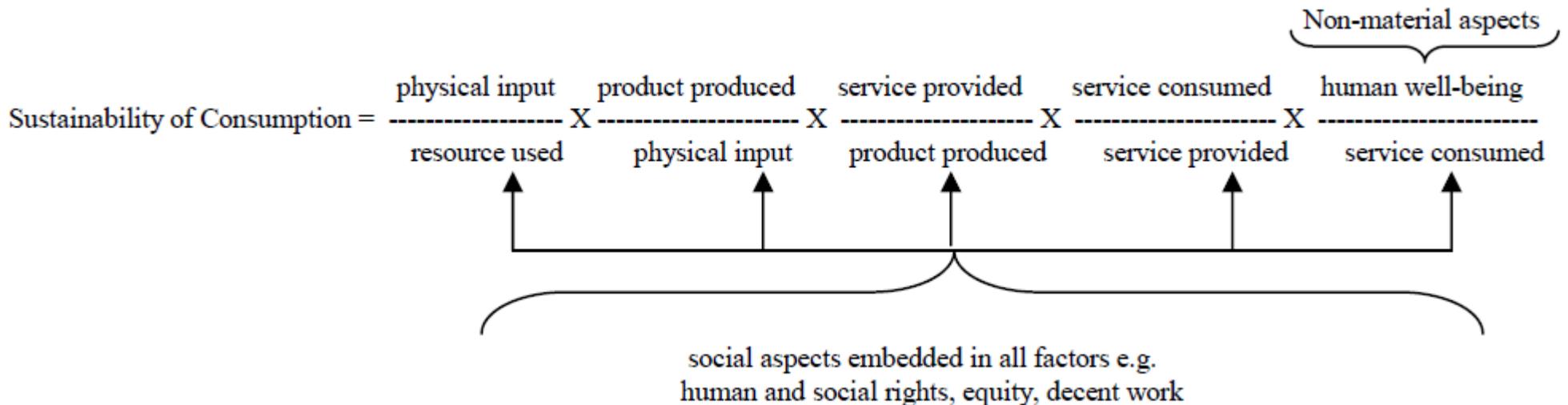
and a development aspect

→ The well-being of people matters!

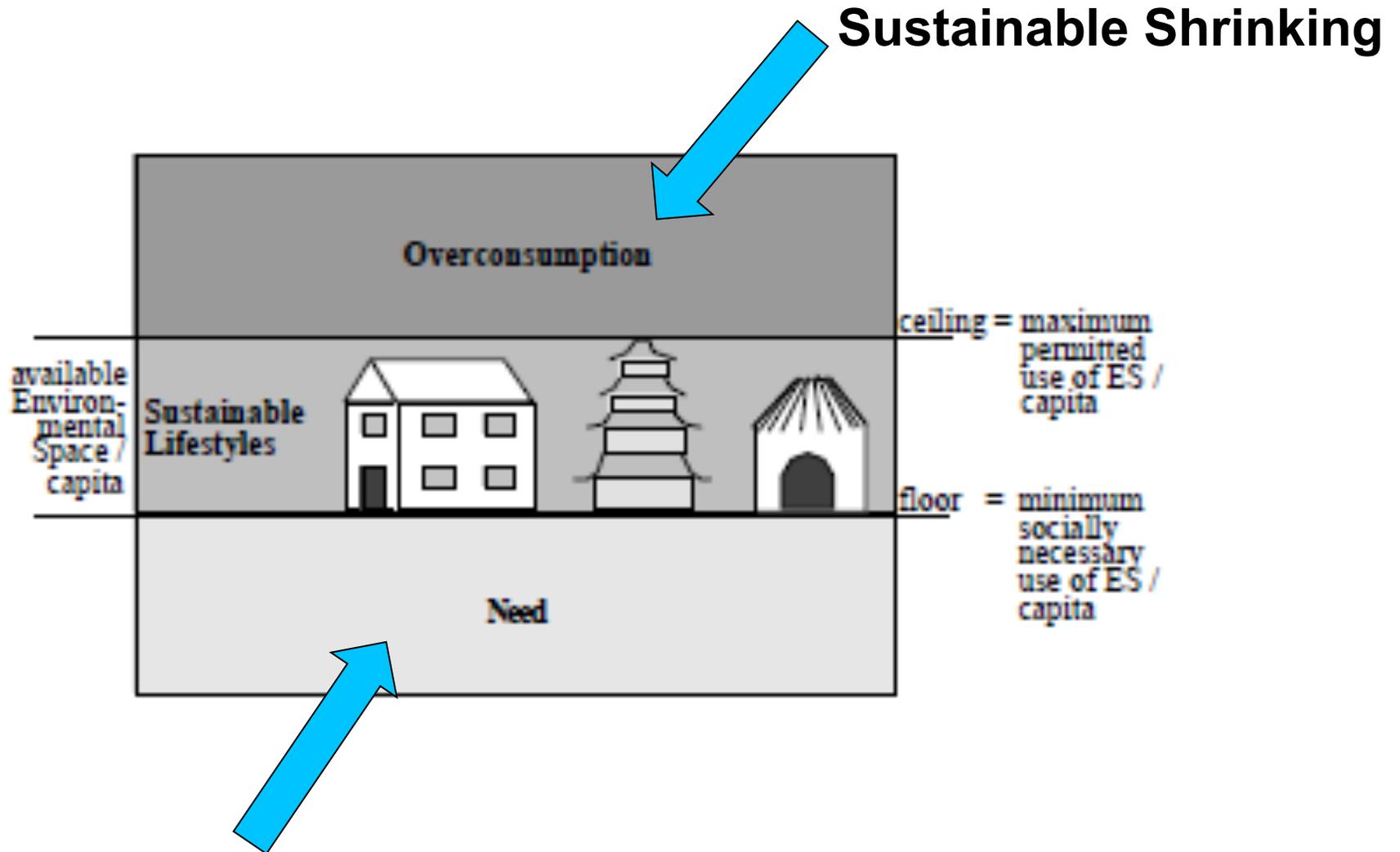
...and their (resource) consumption is an important aspect in it

(Mis-) Understandings of Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable Consumption = $\frac{\text{Need fulfilment}}{\text{Resource use}}$ or in other words $\frac{\text{Human well-being}}{\text{Resource use}}$



Sustainable Consumption and Green Growth



Green Growth

Debunking Green Economy based on Weak Sustainable Consumption

Recent Policies on Sustainable Consumption:

- Concentration on environmental aspects and their technical solution
- Search for solutions focusing on goods and services in form of commodities
- Economic growth as the major indicator for a 'better life'

They neglect that:

- Well-being is correlated with material consumption up to a certain level only
- Well-being also depends on social aspects
- Growth and rebound effects compensate technological efficiency gains

**→ This (if at all) only reflects a weak approach of Sustainable Consumption
It neither meets the dimension nor the urgency of the problem**

Debunking Weak Sustainable Consumption

Living situation for global population

Policy approach	Living situation for global population	
	Technology can solve the problems	Technology can't solve the problems
Weak Sustainable Consumption policy	High material standard of living for some; less poverty for others?	Living in misery for most
Strong Sustainable Consumption policy	High human well-being for most	Balanced living for most

Towards Strong Sustainable Consumption Governance

Strong Sustainable Consumption as precondition for Green Economies in the sense of Sustainable societies

- It inquires into appropriate levels of consumption
- It questions affluence and its underlying growth paradigm ($I \downarrow = P \uparrow \times A \downarrow \times T?$)
- It demands reallocation of resources to those with the highest marginal utility rate, the poor and thus improves the overall wellbeing of society without growth
- It supports well-being effects decoupled from market activities and economic growth rates



Towards Strong Sustainable Consumption Governance

Governance strategies for Strong Sustainable Consumption

- Carrot and stick to stimulate the societal debate
- Strengthen responsibility of governments
- Appreciate the potential of social innovation
- Focus NGO strategies