

The If, How and Where of Sustainable Resource Use

Frank Figge*

Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK, 25 University Square, Belfast BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland, UK, Tel +44 28 9097 1363, Fax +44 28 9097 5156, Email: f.figge@qub.ac.uk

* corresponding author

Tobias Hahn

Euromed Management School, Domaine de Luminy – BP 921, 13288 Marseille Cedex 9, France, Tel +33 49182 7313, Fax +33 49182 7983, Email: tobias.hahn@euromed-management.com

Lydia Illge

IZT –Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment, Schopenhauerstr. 26, 14129 Berlin, Germany, Tel +49 30 803088 34, Fax +49 30 803088 88, Email: l.illge@izt.de

Abstract

In this paper, we identify three fundamental but interrelated perspectives on the sustainability assessment of resource use. These three perspectives correspond to the three assessment questions if, how, and where resources should be used. Given the deficit of the majority of existing sustainability assessment approaches in making their underlying assessment perspective explicit, we provide structure and organisation to existing approaches and identify gaps in existing research. In addition, we underline the necessity that any discussion on the appropriateness and validity of different assessment approaches and their results must take into account the underlying assessment perspective. At the same time, the three questions if, how, and where resources should be used correspond to the requirements of a sustainable resource use. While assessments can address the three questions in isolation, it is all the more important that the limitations and implications of focussing on a single perspective are spelled out. We provide the context and structure for a more informed and fruitful debate on the assessment of sustainable resource use.

Keywords: Sustainability assessment, Sustainable resource use, Welfare economics, Production economics, Financial management