

Ethical approaches for the study of economic subsystem innovations – linking normative concepts of degrowth & bioeconomy

Paper presented at the Workshop
of Mentalities in flux
Institut für Soziologie
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
7th and 8th October 2020



**Hochschule
für nachhaltige Entwicklung
Eberswalde**

Forschungszentrum
Nachhaltigkeit – Transformation – Transfer

Speakers: Dr. Wibke Crewett, Dr. Uwe Demele
Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development
Research Centre [Sustainability – Transformation – Transfer]

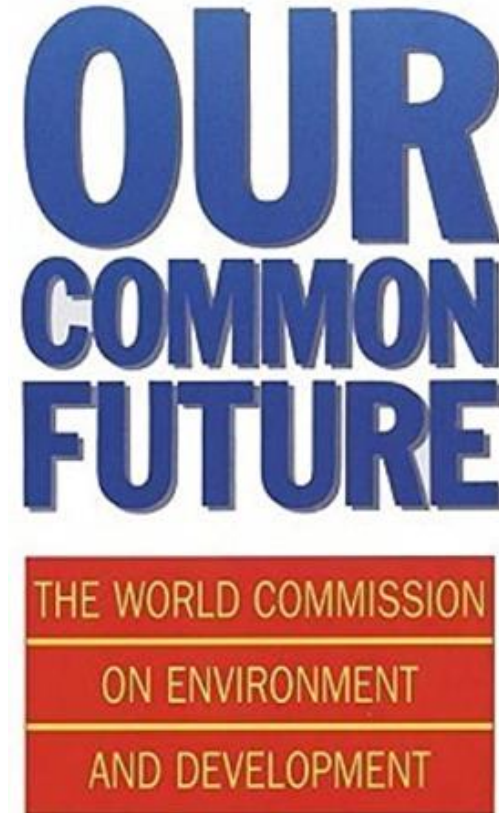
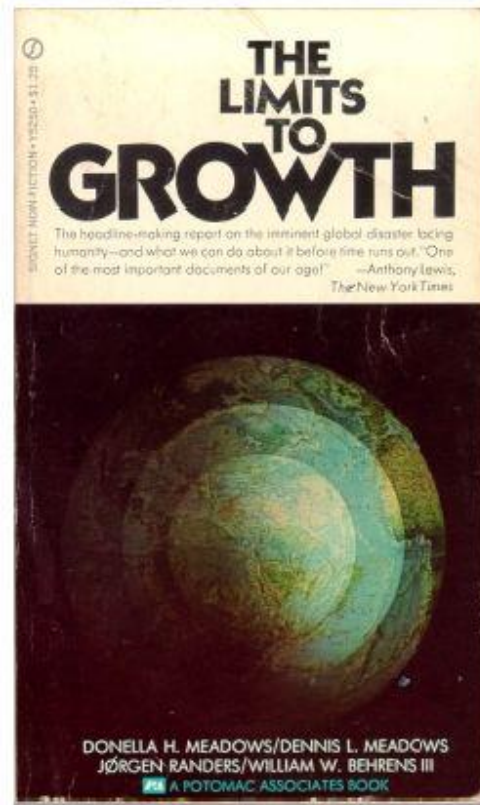
OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
- II. Normative sustainability analysis with responsible business ethics
- III. Criteria in detail
- IV. Conclusion: Normative substance of sustainable economic subsystems in comparison

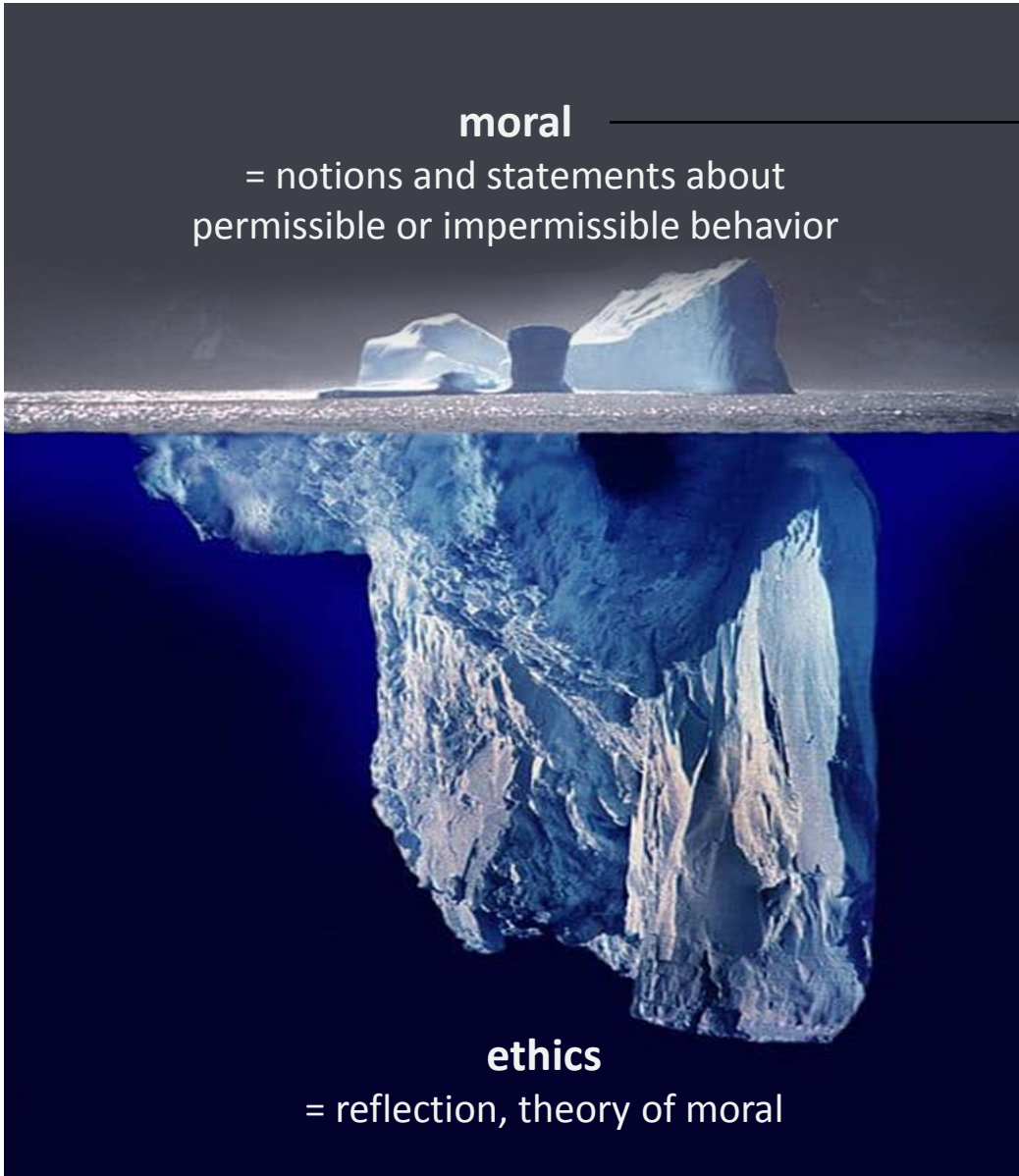
I. Introduction

What are the ethics on which normative sustainability approaches are based?

A few examples ...



I. Introduction



moral

= notions and statements about permissible or impermissible behavior

→ **expressed by norms**

= rules, guidelines, standards, principles, instructions for action



Problem diagnosis

These norms are often reduced to buzzwords, e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility or Sustainability as a term in itself.

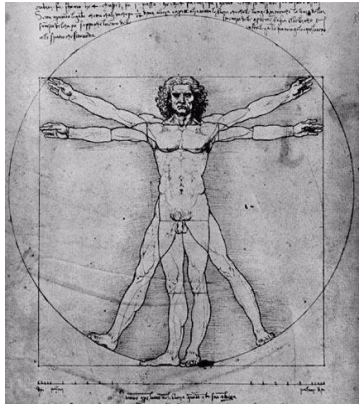
Especially in the economic sustainability debate with its many sub-economies like green, circular, bio-based, degrowth economies or even deep ecology, it is not always clear on which ethics of responsibility certain norms are based. This often leads to misunderstandings and confusions.

Therefore: Conceptual clarity about ethics is crucial when it comes to the understanding and practical enforceability of sustainability, especially when this involves the claim of an economic transformation.

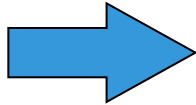
II. Normative sustainability analysis with responsible business ethics

Moral Interests

Anthropocentrism



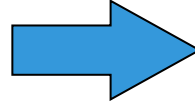
(Greek anthropos: human being)



Pathocentrism



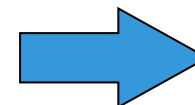
(Greek pathos: pain, suffering)



Biocentrism



(Greek bios: life)



Holism

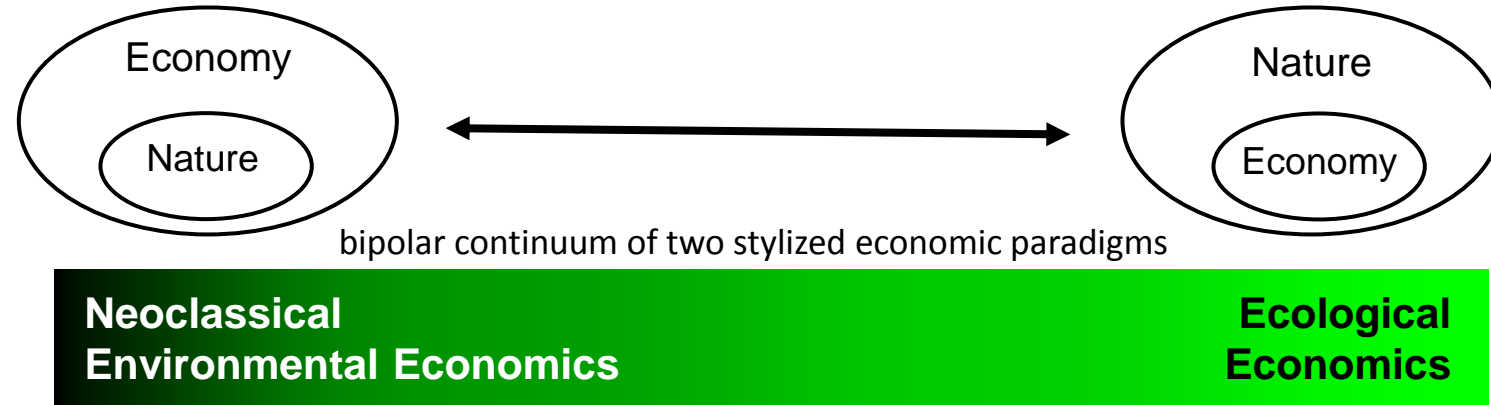


(Greek holos: whole, entire)

II. Normative sustainability analysis with responsible business ethics

KEY QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Who owes *whom*
an *answer to what*
for *how long*
based on
which normative concept?



Analytical Criteria

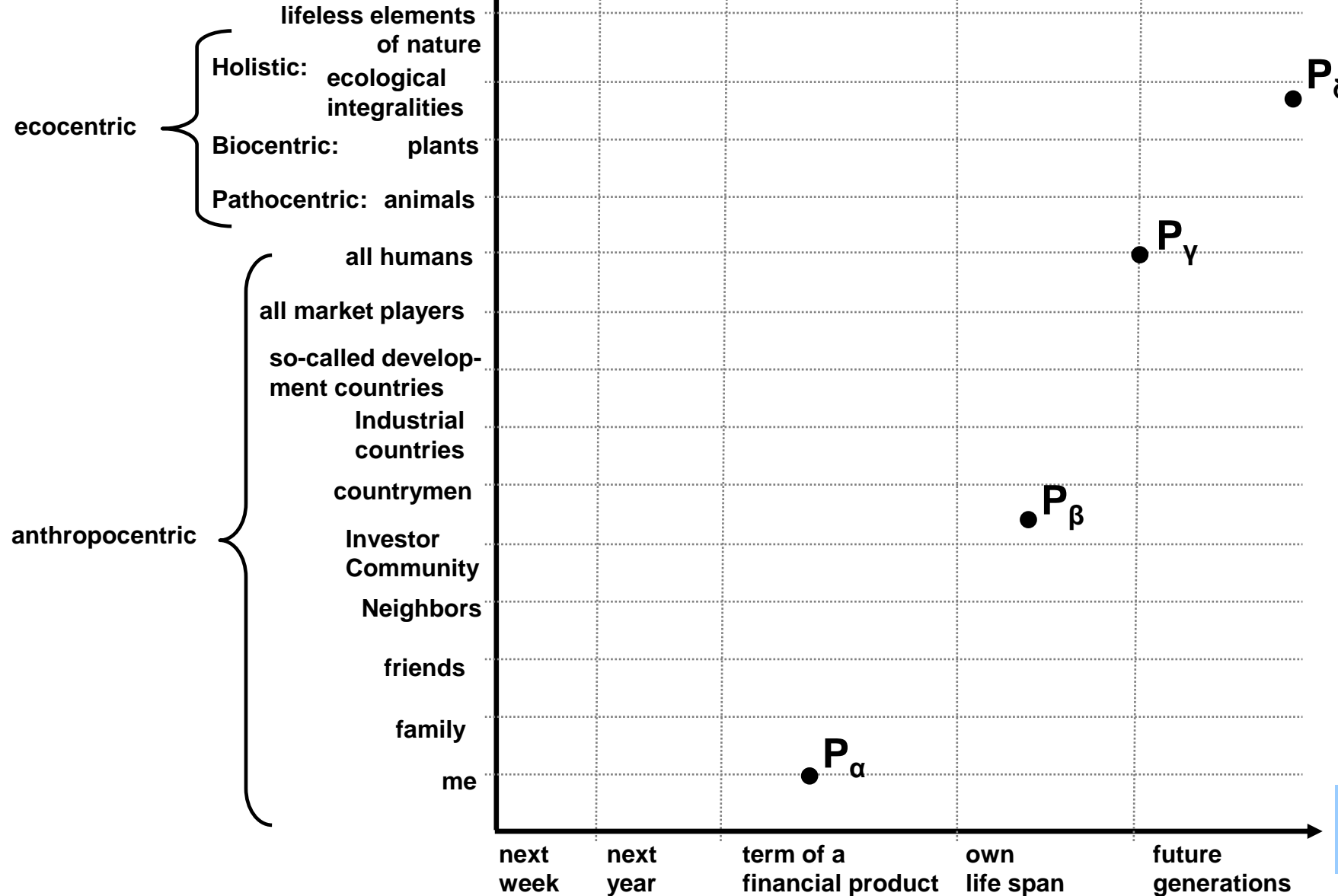
Consideration of moral interests	pure anthropocentric	ecocentric
Time horizon of assuming responsibility	short-term (discounted future)	long-term (oriented on ecological periods of time)
Values and Principles	quantitative growth, profit maximization	moderate towards zero growth, stable ecosystems, conservation of nature
Bearer of responsibility for sustainability	state by creating a legal framework (internalization of negative spillover effects)	all market players (with and without economical incentives)
Strategy	efficiency	sufficiency

the more one moves from neoclassical environmental economics towards ecological economics, the broader and more complex are the elements of responsibility

(Source: own representation)

III. Criteria in detail

Consideration of moral interests



(Source: own representation, based on Meadows et al. 1972/ 1979, p. 13))

Time horizon of assuming responsibility

IV. Conclusion: Normative substance of sustainable economic subsystems in comparison

	Bioeconomy	Degrowth Economy
Sustainability strategy	Efficiency and substitution	Sufficiency
Requirement	Resource input (land), technology	Behavioural change Decrease of consumption and production
Role of consumer	buyer of bio-based products	participates in production as a prosumer must/is obliged to limit consumption must refrain from purchase of unsustainable products
Role of economy	= environmental and social dimension	< ecological dimension
Role of economic growth (GDP)	Qualitative growth necessary to maintain stable ecosystems (land and marine) employment and prosperity	Moderate to 0 downsizing in order to maintain planetary boundaries must ensure the continued existence of mankind
Possibility of decoupling economic growth from environmental impact	Possible, as there is still enormous potential for efficiency, rebound effects are irrelevant	Unrealistic, as increased production and rebound effects destroy any efficiency potential
Time horizon of business	Mid-term to long-term	Long-term
Ethics	Anthropocentric	Ecocentric
Responsibility	1. Government 2. innovative market players	All market players (with or without economical incentives)